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The Royal College of Organists.

A COURSE OF THREE LECTURES

ON

Choir Training,

(WITH ILLUSTRATIONS),

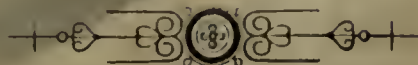
BY

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GIVEN ON

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CHOIR TRAINING.

Three Lectures delivered at The Royal College of Organists, by

H. W. RICHARDS, Mus.B., F.R.C.O., Hon.R.A.M.

(Professor of Choir Training in the Royal Academy of Music.)

On June 6th, 13th, and 20th, 1903.



LECTURE I.

Qualifications of a Choirmaster—Discipline—Selection of boy—Voice and ear tests—Production of a boy's voice—Registers—Vowels—Breathing—Resonance—Rudiments—Compass of a boy's voice—Scales—Arpeggi—Solfeggi.

The aim of these lectures is not to cover the whole ground of the large subject of choir training, on which there are many valuable works to consult. This would be hardly possible within the space of time at my disposal. I would rather devote myself to a more useful object, and that is, to giving, as far as in me lies, practical advice on commonplace points too often neglected, for the benefit of those who most need it—namely those choirmasters who have to do the best they can with poorly paid or voluntary choirs in a small parish church. You will agree with me that these are the majority in our land. But it is not often considered what an exceedingly hard task these men have to perform. Where there is a choir school, or a rich endowment, things are infinitely simplified. But where means are restricted, and a man has, so to speak, to make bricks without straw, the difficulties of a choirmaster are such as could hardly be imagined by his more fortunate brother. Of these difficulties I propose to speak later, as they occur, point by point.

In handbooks on the subject one may read the following: "Be sure to choose your boys from refined homes." "Never allow them to sing in the week at places of worldly amusement." "Practise them regularly every day." To the choirmaster whom I have in mind, these are counsels of perfection, dis-

heartening rather than helpful. How is a man to do all this when it is a matter of some difficulty to get a choir of voices together at all? How indeed is a man to attain any results worth having, from at the most two practices a week, from boys of the very roughest, who spend all their play-time shouting and yelling in the streets? This is no overdrawn picture. Many present to-day could doubtless mention more than one such instance. In the circumstances of the case lies the crux, and if I can help anyone to toil more hopefully under these conditions, I shall feel much gratified. Of course I shall be unable to confine myself to remarks suitable only to cases of the above description. But I hope all who work at the subject, however they may be placed, will find some helpful suggestions that appeal to their needs.

Choirmaster v. Clergy.—You will I hope forgive me if I decline to touch upon the fertile theme of choirmaster v. clergy or precentor. We have only to read our musical magazines to be well posted in one side of this controversy, and I doubt not that our clerical papers could with equal fulness give the other. At the same time, I will mention that it is a great matter to secure the sympathetic help of the Rector or Vicar, as many little differences can be adjusted if he has tact and sympathy. He may know nothing of music, but he will learn how full of thorns is a choirmaster's lot—by no means a bed of roses. Another thing I must decline entirely, and that is, to be drawn into a newspaper correspondence with any ardent spirits who do not agree with my views. Many points that I shall be obliged to touch upon are open questions, which may very possibly not be closed in our life-time. But newspaper argument rarely produces a settlement of any question, and where we cannot agree we must agree to differ.

Qualities.—Now let us turn for a few moments to the consideration of the qualities necessary for a good choirmaster. Knowledge of music alone is not foundation enough on which to train a choir. He must have a very adequate knowledge of men and boys who would deal with them successfully.

Discipline.—And here I am convinced that the first essential is that he should be a good disciplinarian. For want of this, one has often seen all other gifts become useless and of no effect. No amount of learning, genius and ability, can compensate for the absence of it. I was lately told, as a fact, of a most talented young choirmaster, highly qualified in every way, who ended his first practice by receiving a good licking at the hands of his own choir boys. Strength of character, although a very

Despatch
Self-confidence
Methodical
Punctuality

important factor in maintaining discipline, is not the only thing to be thought of. Definiteness, a touch of self-confidence, and quickness of insight, are just as necessary. I think you will agree with me that these endowments are very desirable, but are most hard to test in any examination. 7

Keeness.—A choirmaster must be not only firm, but deeply interested in his work, and be able to impart this interest to the point of enthusiasm to his choir. Any apathy on his part is immediately infused into the choir, and all “esprit de corps” goes to pieces in a moment when the choirmaster loses keeness.

Not only for the sake of the choir, but for his own sake let him be *methodical*. Hours of labour will in this way be saved. If he has not method naturally, let him spare no pains to acquire it. Almost more than any other virtue it is its own reward. In the matter of discipline mentioned just now, let him not be above disciplining himself in such an important trifle as punctuality.

Punctuality.—It is obviously useless for a choirmaster to find fault with choristers for unpunctuality, unless they know that he can be depended on to be in good time himself. And when I say “in good time,” I do not mean rushing in at the last moment, too late to set right any little accident that may confront him, but *before* time, to ascertain that everything is in readiness, so that the choir may begin to the moment.

What I have been saying on this head is twice as important where a man's time is limited, and where he is practically dependent on himself for everything.

Fault-Finding.—Where a choirmaster has to find fault, let it be in the fewest words possible. Boys respect a short and sharp reprimand, but a long harangue does no good at all. The best punishment for a troublesome boy is one in which unfortunately the choirmaster suffers too, viz., making him stay behind and practise after the others have gone off to play. This will be found most effective, and holding this punishment over the offender will as a rule deter him from indulging in what he calls “larks.”

Analytical Ear.—In correcting mistakes, wrong notes or faulty intonation, what I shall now call an “analytical ear” is indispensable. You must be able to pick out the individual who is wrong. But I would recommend not mentioning him by name. For instance—should it be some special decani tenor singing flat, say: “tenors on the decani side are out of tune.” Making corrections in this collective, impersonal fashion often saves hurt feelings. Naturally you must be quite certain you

are right before you speak, as any little slip on your part will sadly interfere with the respect with which you are regarded. Again, in correcting mistakes, should you find that you are in the wrong, own up like a man. It is the shortest, wisest, and truest course to pursue, and will rather raise than lower you in the estimation of your choir.

Temper.—One more hint on the unpleasant duty of fault-finding. Of course there are times when extra firmness is necessary. Your own judgment must tell you when to exercise it, but remember that the moment a man loses his temper he gives himself away entirely.

Conceit.—A perfectly fatal defect is conceit in a young choirmaster. How often is it exhibited in corrections, showing off his own knowledge, or lack of it, not always very wisely, at the expense of a chorister.

Wit.—Then as to witty remarks. Great care is needed in this direction. The wish to be thought funny is a positive disease in some people, but I cannot think it either right or wise when you have sacred matters in hand, and are liable to hurt the feelings of any in your choir. Be master—but there is no need to be so oppressively superior. If you must air your knowledge on some point, do it quietly, with the aim and object of improving matters, not with the idea and tone of showing how wonderfully clever you are.

Short Training Time.—Let us now turn to the choirmaster's work with the boys. The most trying fact in connection with a boy's voice is the fewness of the years in which it has to be trained, and then the disappearance of the voice altogether just when it is at its best.

Age to Begin.—I think, looking at the question all round, 9 years of age is young enough to start. A boy may give evidence of a pretty voice before that time, but he is as a rule hampered by not being able to read quickly.

Probationers.—There has been an universal habit in large choirs of taking small boys as probationers. This should be carried out when possible in every choir small or large. In this way, and in this way only, will it be possible to obviate that fluctuation to which all choirs are liable. No choir should be perceptibly impoverished by the loss of one or two leading boys when their voices break. By the judicious training of probationers, the loss of a leading boy will be less felt. This replenishing of a choir from the bottom, before it empties at the top, is a most necessary art. We are told not to anticipate

misfortune, but the great misfortune, which it undoubtedly is, when a trained boy's voice breaks suddenly, will be anticipated and forestalled by a far-seeing choirmaster. The smaller your average number of boys, the more careful should you be of this.

Another very strong reason in favour of probationers is, that the imitative power of children is so great that such boys will learn production from the others almost unconsciously, and with little trouble to themselves or to their teacher.

It may also be found useful to be able to degrade a troublesome boy from his place in the regular choir, and promote a probationer for a time. The disgrace of this is a most effectual punishment.

Poaching.—Another depressing fact in many a choirmaster's experience is, that directly he has worked some special boy up to the point of becoming useful, he may be snatched away from him, and the whole fruit of his labours lost, by a good offer from a richer church. You will not fail to see how unfair it is that a choirmaster should expend great trouble, pains, and time upon a rough boy, and improve him perhaps in every way, merely for the benefit of another choir.

There are one or two ways of obviating this calamity.

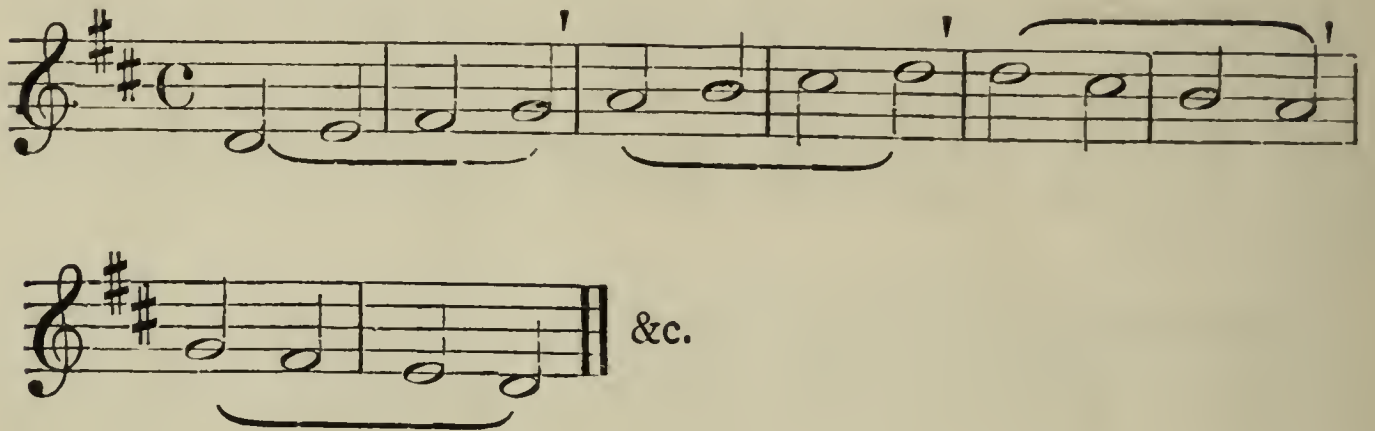
1. **Agreement.**—Have a written agreement with the parents of any promising boy, signed by the vicar and churchwarden. You will seldom be reduced to disputing it in a court of law.

2. **Bonus.**—Some bonus scheme. By this I mean: a certain proportion of the boy's salary kept back and properly recorded. To this a liberal interest is added by the church authorities, who let it accumulate until his voice breaks. Should he leave without adequate excuse before this time, he forfeits the whole sum. On the other hand, if he remains on in the choir, he is entitled to receive at the proper time an amount of money which is found to be a great help towards his start in life.

Kindness.—In the matter of keeping our boys, it is important to remember that they are very susceptible to kindness. But kindness must be most judiciously exercised, and never allowed to degenerate into petting, which will make them either ninnies or sneaks, or inclined to take advantage of their teacher.

Petting of Solo-Boys.—The foolish petting of solo-boys, indulged in by some kind-hearted members of the congregation, will often make them very tiresome to deal with for the choirmaster. Tips do not hurt them so much, but flattery and glasses of port wine do no good to mind or body.

Trying Voices.—Let us now imagine that an inexperienced young choirmaster has a row of boys before him to be tried. How is he to begin? What is to decide him in his choice? Give each in turn the major scale of perhaps D, E, or F to be sung quite slowly to the sound “la,” each note to be of two beats length.



The scale must be sung up and down, and breath taken at every 4th note. With a raw boy it is better to sing the scale yourself as a guide, if you know how to produce your own voice properly. What will happen when the boy sings it? He will first without doubt try to force his chest register up to the highest note, and give that awful production which we are accustomed to hear in the street, and which is so often heard in bad choirs.

Model Boy.—Should this be the case, get another boy whom you have already trained properly, if you have one, to sing a few notes in the head register, to show your novice the tone that you require. Any rough and uneducated boy will learn far more from example than precept. He probably has never heard and does not understand what you mean by “good tone” and “singing softly.” The practice of making two boys sing together is a very good one. Not only because the inferior singer insensibly imitates the better, but because it helps him to overcome that awkward shyness which is nearly always met with in a boy first starting to sing. He appears to be frightened at the sound of his own voice, and perhaps you will say no wonder! Now explain to your novice that this soft head sound is what you want from him, and in order to get him to feel the difference, give him E to sing on the vowel “oo,” as in “cool,” very softly:



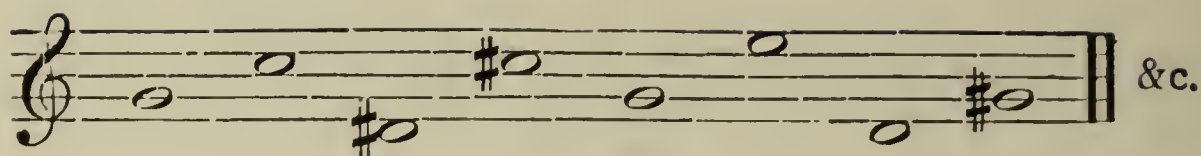
oo

At this pitch, and with this vowel, he will be unable to use his chest register, and may give you a good head note. If so, impress upon him at once that this is the quality of tone that you require. Then when you have got this sound properly established, take him slowly down the scale on the same vowel, continuing the head voice as far as you can get it. Directly he relapses into the chest voice, stop, and begin him again at the top, and never allow the chest voice a hearing. Having satisfied yourself by this trial that he possesses a good head voice, of fair compass and serviceable quality, you might admit him into the choir. In this connection, Sir George Martin observes that a "young boy with a good head register should be accepted, even though his lower notes are weak."

Considerations.—But, first consider one or two other points. If the boy is young, his possibilities must be weighed. If he is getting old, say 12 or 13, remember that your time for working him up is short, and your enjoyment of the result will be shorter still, also that any bad habits he may have acquired will be harder to overcome.

Intelligence.—Ask general questions on any matter to test his intelligence. A bright boy is often of more use in a choir than one with a better voice who is dull and slow. An inattentive, fidgety boy, however gifted, is sometimes more trouble than he is worth. More often than not, a boy who is possessed of a beautiful voice and musical ability is also gifted with very high spirits and a fund of mischief, which causes great embarrassment from time to time to his musical instructor. For this kind of temperament firmness and tact are particularly required. Do not be led away by admiration for a fine, loud voice. Such voices are often most difficult to train into good ways, and mingle indifferently with the others to the end. It is hardly artistic to hear one boy's voice dominating the choir.

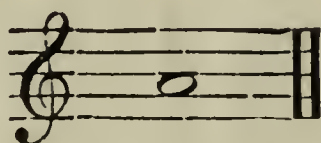
Ear Tests.—Musical ear is another important consideration. Ear tests must never be omitted, and a boy with a defective ear, however good his voice, may prove a pernicious influence, doing untold harm to others from this very cause. For instance, if he sings flat, and is unaware of it, he brings down the whole choir with him. This kind of boy, I think, is to be avoided. In addition to the scale work suggested above, I would recommend striking first single notes to test his ear, and then simple chords and arpeggi on the pianoforte, and asking the boy to sing each note after you strike it. Notes that have no key connection might be given him as a final test.



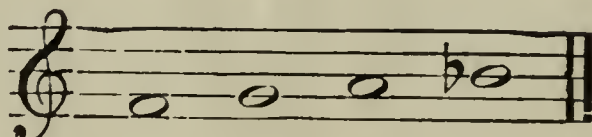
What method?—Now, having got your selected boys together, you have to make a start in training them. The very open question here confronts us of what Method among the many in vogue is to be adopted for the production of their voices? Handbooks are at variance on this point; evidently one man's meat is another man's poison, and the inexperienced choirmaster, at the crucial point of starting his first boys, may be utterly bewildered. Shall he conclude that all methods are equally good in their own way, and that he has only to adopt one method, and teach it well, to have his labours crowned with success? Or is it not rather true, as I cannot but think, that different methods will succeed in different conditions?

The three methods.—The three chief methods in general use are the following :—

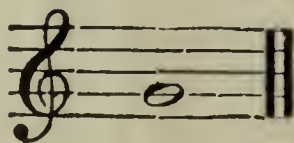
1. To use no chest voice at all, and carry the head voice right down to the lowest notes which a treble will commonly be called upon to sing.
2. To let the break from head to chest be a natural one, occurring about A—



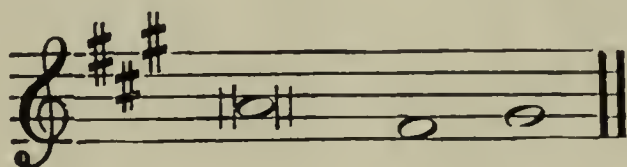
3. For the middle notes F, G, A, B♭, use a kind of mixed production of head and chest—



Many learned and weighty arguments are used both for and against each of these methods, and I am quite aware that good practical illustrations can be given of the working of all three, but my opinion is as follows :—Where there is a choir school, and boys have daily practice and attention, the chest voice up to G can be used with considerable effect.



It will, however, want very careful treatment, and the rough tones of the chest will always have to be modified to meet the weaker tones of the head voice, and so bridge over the difference in quality of the two registers. This is by some choirmasters brought to a very fine point of perfection, various phrases being minutely marked off for head and chest voice. This minuteness is all very well where you have the means, and time, and trained boy at your disposal. But let us take for instance the simple and much sung response—



How much better it would be to sing the whole of this in the head voice, than in the chest voice, or perhaps the first note A in the head register, and then the F# and G# in the chest! You cannot avoid having two qualities of tone perceptible, if you divide up the notes between the two registers.

It must always be remembered that in introducing the chest voice you are treading on very dangerous ground. In a choir school where the boy is under the hourly supervision of his master, this danger is minimised. But where a choirmaster can only bestow very limited training, and the tendency of daily life outside the choir is towards the exercise of the chest voice exclusively, in my opinion the chest voice must be suppressed altogether and Method 1 adopted. With rough boys, half an hour's play in the street with its accompaniment of yells and screams, will undo all the refining work of the practice. And not only so; the chest voice of such a boy will be permanently roughened and spoiled, so that it can never be refined to any point worth the labour. I cannot help feeling that those choirmasters who cultivate the chest voice, and with good effect, only succeed as they do, because they have refined material to work upon. Let us take for example the choirmaster of whom I spoke at the beginning of my lecture, and whom I wish to help. Having only two weekly practices, and very rough boys for his choristers, his only chance in my opinion is to use nothing but the head voice throughout the compass, as this class of boy cannot any longer use his chest voice with anything like refinement, and in forcing his chest register, as he undoubtedly will, not being always under supervision, he may permanently injure his entire voice.

Besides this, many a disappointment will be in store for the choirmaster, who, after great pains and trouble, congratulates himself on having entirely softened down the boys' chest notes,

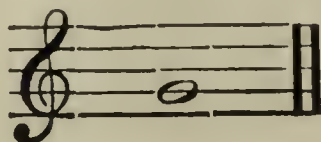
and on having got quite a nice tone at the Friday's practice. When Sunday's service comes, and he is helpless to stop and correct, he will find that, generally through inattention, the unsympathetic hard chest tone will be freely used.

You will never be safe from the harsh tone of an unrefined chest register, unless you make it a hard and fast rule that the boys are not to use it at all.

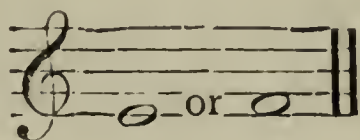
Low Notes, Weak.—With this head voice method, (Method 1) complaint will at once be made that the low notes, notably in a low reciting note of a chant or monotone, are weak and without ring. In comparison with the other production this is undoubtedly so, though we do not hear this criticism made upon men's voices, which are also comparatively weak on the lowest notes of their compass. We shall notice this in speaking on "ensemble." With constant descending scale practice, these weak notes in our boys may be wonderfully developed, and I contend that any feebleness is to be preferred to the strident street quality into which these notes in the chest voice are liable to relapse with the rough boy. You will be surprised how very much fuller the tone of these notes will become with practice. You have only to try this to prove it. For a time you may have complaints to face on this score. Do not be daunted by them. Strength of mind must uphold you till your reward comes in the increased volume of tone which your boys will produce, coupled with purity. (Illustration).

Physiology.—I need not trouble you with the physiology of this subject. It has been very ably treated by the eminent authorities Lennox Browne and Behnke in their "Voice Song and Speech" and "The Mechanism of the Human Voice." The very essence of their teaching is: "Never extend the lower register upwards, but strengthen the upper register and carry it downwards." "The carrying down of a register causes no fatigue" etc. Undeveloped and untrained voices can hardly sing for ten minutes without fatigue, which proves that natural production, that is to say, that to which Nature inclines us, is not always the best for sustained singing.

Method 2.—Where Method 2 is adopted (and I have heard it done with great success with refined material) the chest voice should never be taken above "G,"



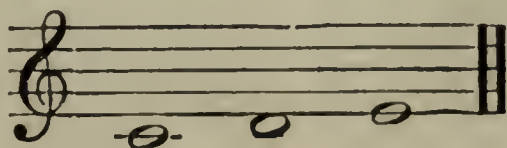
I think "G," should be the outside limit. Behnke and Lennox Browne, in "The Child's Voice," say "It will be particularly necessary to prevent boys from carrying their chest register above E or F,"



This method will always require very great care and attention. The head voice must in any case be cultivated from "G" upwards. The harsh quality of the whole chest register must be moderated; and the break must be overcome by the softening of the chest note and the strengthening of the head note, so that it shall not be perceptible when the voice passes from one to the other. Sir George Martin says: "Some boys can never conquer the difficulty of joining the registers of the voice in a smooth and even manner." Another radical objection to Method 2 in my opinion is, that it hinders boys from singing as it were unconsciously. There should not be too much theorizing with them about registers. With this method they are bound with every note they sing near the break to be thinking—"is it in the right register? Am I changing properly from head to chest?" The question of registers is one purely for the teacher. The pupil should never be conscious of it.

Method 3.—With regard to the mixed tone which some choirmasters tell us they employ, my own ears tell me that there is more head voice in it than chest, and in any case it requires as much teaching and care as Method 2, and it will be difficult to get a rough boy to understand it without constant practice.

At this point you may like to hear the opinion of a very distinguished choir trainer, remembering that he has to do exclusively with picked boys of an educated class living in a choir school. He says: "I never trouble about registers. At first I should use only the head voice, but as time advances I say nothing if a boy uses his chest register, as long as I find it is of a refined quality, but the moment I hear a harsh note I drop on him at once." This whole state of things is of course entirely different from the ordinary case of a parish church choir. I *personally* prefer *chest* notes to be used for C, D and E,

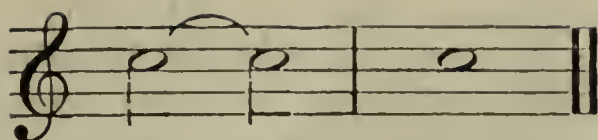


but looking at the question from all sides, I unhesitatingly recommend Method 1 to the choirmaster of the ordinary church, because I believe it is the simplest and easiest for the boys to understand, and will produce the purest tone, as well as the best general results. When Method 1 has been thoroughly taught, the introduction of a few chest notes at the lower part of the boy's compass is an easy matter, and very often the boys will fall into it naturally. (Illustration).

I shall have more to say on this when I speak on Monotoning and on other subjects in Lectures 2 and 3.

National Schools.—If elementary school children were taught to sing on this method from their earliest years, it would immensely lighten the labours of the choirmaster later on, but I regret to think that elementary school singing often tends to quantity, not quality, and a hearty school song that makes the rafters ring and the windows rattle and our throats ache in sympathy, is the summit of ambition in many cases. School singing in two or three parts is often very injurious to the head voice. The second and third treble parts, being entirely on low notes, in order to be heard must be sung by the chest voice continuously. Thus the head voice gets no practice or cultivation, and being never used, almost ceases to exist.

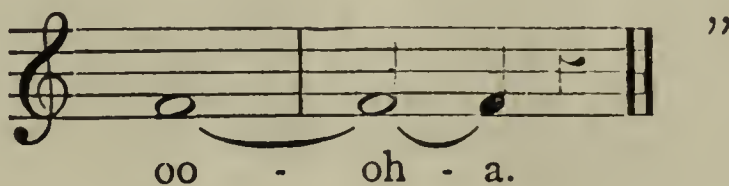
Vowel "oo."—You will remember that I advised the use of the vowel "oo"—which is the equivalent for the Italian "u"—in trying a boy's voice, for the reason that it places the voice forward. In practising I think this vowel "oo" must be used in moderation, or an invariable "oo-mon" will be the result, a variety of Amen too often heard. This vowel "oo," be it understood, is only a means to an end, and not the end itself. It seems that it is practised to the exclusion, by some choir-masters, of all other sounds. They think that having achieved a good tone with this, they need go no further. In this way every word is "oo"ed to death, and a boy's pronunciation made positively ridiculous. "Woo besooch thoo to hure oos good Lood". . . . etc. On those who have taught on this plan, let me impress the fact that the vowel "ah" is the end to aim at; but how are we to obtain the proper production on this vowel sound? In order to arrive at this from the "oo" which is still recommended for placing the voice at first, a good exercise is the following:—A sustained note beginning on "oo" and the tone to be kept in the same position, the lips alone moving to "oh," and then to "ah." For the latter vowel the lips must be inclined towards a smile.



oo - oh - ah.

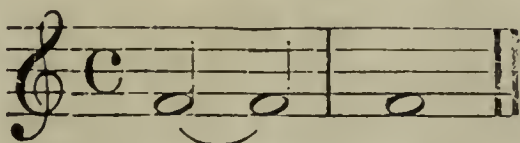
As the tendency of English voices is to send the vowel "ah" back into the throat, the greatest care will be necessary to ensure that the tone is kept in the same position in the front of the mouth, and only an easy and very slight movement of the lips made for the change of vowel. When you can get a boy to sing "ah" with the proper head voice, without the previous vowels "oo" and "oh," you may congratulate yourself that you are over the bridge with the production of his voice.

Randegger.—You will I am sure be glad to hear what no less an authority than Mr. Randegger says on this point. "When after some practice the voice gets accustomed to ring in the front of the mouth, the "oo" should be gradually changed into other vowels, taking care while so doing that the column of air continues without interruption, and that the stream of sound preserves the same direction towards the front of the mouth, thus :—



oo - oh - a.

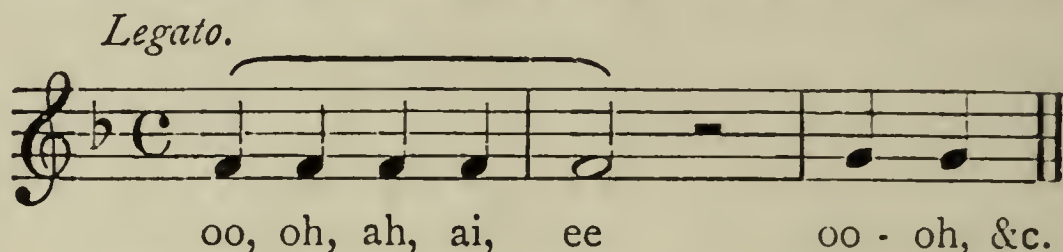
Another useful exercise to acquire the proper production with "ah" is :—



Hoo - aw - ah.

Vowels.—Assuming that the boys have now thoroughly grasped the production of the head voice with the vowel "ah" properly placed, I strongly recommend that *all* the vowels be practised, and as a beginning, nothing can be better than "do, re, mi," etc., according to the moveable "do" system. This will have four most important results. It will teach a boy to sing any vowel on any note ; encourage lip movement, so often neglected ; help him to read music ; and give him an elementary idea of harmony, *i.e.* the place of each note as he sings it in the diatonic scale. Do not be satisfied with "dow" for "do," "faw" for "fa." Get your vowels pure. As Henry Deacon says in his valuable Treatise on Singing contributed to Grove's Dictionary, "A pure vowel will bring a pure tone."

A choirmaster very often finds a difficulty in keeping boys' production good the moment they begin to sing to actual words, though they may have achieved a pure tone with the vowel sound "oo," and even "ah." His best remedy will be, not only to practise *all* the vowels, and "do, re, mi," etc., as suggested above, but to extend the "oo, oh, ah," by the addition of "ai and ee," and practise these sounds on every note of the scale :—



The lips only, of course, must move for the change of vowel, the throat remaining open throughout, and the sound being kept in the same position in the mouth.

Another good plan is to attack the awkward passage in the music, and select for practice the vowels from those words in which the difficulty is experienced. When the boys sing these satisfactorily, the words may then be attempted with advantage.

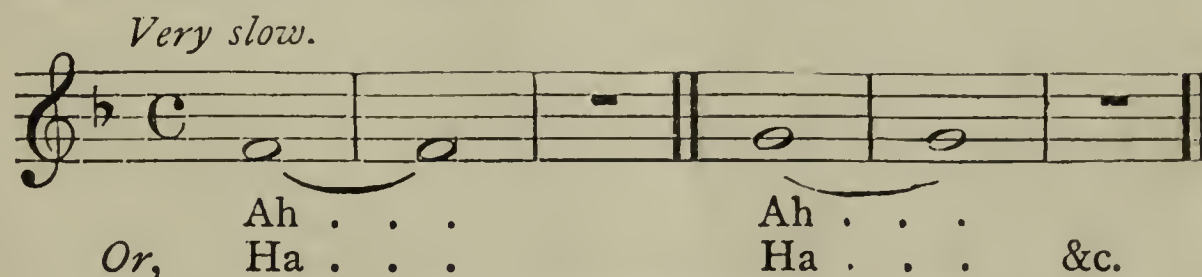
It will sometimes be found a saving of trouble to pick out one intelligent boy and train him in the presence of the others to sing as you wish. You will find that boys imitate one another so readily, that they will learn the quality of tone, etc., that is required more quickly from another boy than from your explanations.

Attitude.—The choirmaster must insist not only on mouth but on teeth being well opened. As a good test, make the boys put their thumb joint sideways between their front teeth. The tongue must be kept lying perfectly flat, and interfere in no way with the outlet of sound. But all stiffness and tension of muscle must be avoided. It is a curious fact that the moment a boy or anyone else is asked to sing, he puts himself into a stiff unnatural attitude, whereas one of the chief secrets in good singing is to get all the muscles loose, and the production easy and unstrained. With boys a tight pinched quality on high notes always means that the throat muscles are screwed up, instead of loose. No stiffness should ever be allowed, the lower jaw being held quite loose.

Breathing.—I now come to that very important matter, breathing. Boys at practice should stand steady on both feet, with chest well expanded. No shuffling or wriggling should be allowed. The lungs should be filled, slowly at first, and mainly through the nose, without the least effect of sniffing. Many authorities on singing advocate this taking breath through the

nose, because by this means the lungs can be more completely and deeply filled. You can try this for yourselves. Of course this nasal inhalation is rather slow, and if you want a quick breath, where only a short rest is given in the music, it must be taken through the mouth, but where time allows, and a trying vocal passage has to be executed, this nasal breathing will be found to give greater storage.

One of the most common faults in an anxious singer is to raise the shoulders and collar bone, thereby only crowding the top of the lungs inconveniently with air, which will make it difficult to control. Remember, a perfect inhalation is never audible. The lower ribs should be expanded to their furthest extent without over effort and kept expanded as long as possible, the breath being stored there and used with the utmost economy. Breathing exercises at first should be entirely silent. Then with slow notes on "ah" as follows :—



The bar's rest is for breath to be taken.

You will also find "ha" a useful sound to use for practice both for breathing and production. Breathing exercises are most necessary, but they must be varied and made interesting to be rightly valued and carefully worked at. Nothing is more useless than a breathing exercise shuffled through by a boy who considers it "all rot." Breathing out slowly and gently will require great control of the muscles. Never force the breath in the production of the voice. Knowing how to spare and make good use of it helps us to exercise all the shades of feeling and expression.

Length of Breath.—Length of breath is essential in good choir singing, and a boy should always be noticed and commended who does his best in this respect. It is a matter which is too often left to take its chance, each boy thinking that nobody hears or cares how he breathes. Nothing can be better than the advice given in Sir George Martin's "Choir Boy Training" on this important point, which really is the basis of all good singing: "First see that the air is taken evenly and quietly, filling the chest, ribs, and abdomen, which will enlarge themselves if the breathing is properly done."

Retention.—Then see that not an atom of air escapes. It

is most important that the teacher should explain to the boys that considerable mental force is required to prevent the air from rushing out too quickly at the beginning of the process of expiration. The rate of inspiration should be at the same pace as that of retention and expiration of the breath." Thus twelve beats might be used as he suggests : "four to take breath, four to hold it, and four to let it gently forth."

If the breath is properly economized in emission we shall never get a husky or breathy tone. This invariably results from letting go more breath than is required to float the sound. When the above is mastered it will be time to try long sustained notes, uniformly *p.* or *f.*, each a whole breath in length. This should be practised through the entire compass, as there is always a tendency to increase or diminish the tone. (We are all familiar with a certain style of singing which can only be likened to a concertina). This exercise will be found useful in two capacities : (1) For breathing ; (2) For obtaining equality of tone. The exercise so commonly taught in place of the above, namely *messa di voce*, consists, as Mr. Randegger puts it, "in commencing a sound as softly as possible, gradually swelling it to its utmost power, and as gradually diminishing it to the degree of softness with which it began. This requires a complete command over the respiratory and vocal organs, and is a finishing study, and not an elementary one, as is so often supposed." (Illustration.)

Resonance.—The subject of "resonance" opens the wide field of acoustics, but without going into it very deeply we must give it its place, and it is an important one in voice production. The question is often asked, what is "resonance?" This will be best answered by an extract from "Acoustics," by Broadhouse : "We may best define resonance as the strengthening or reinforcing of sound. Stretch a violin string over two bridges fixed on a solid block of wood, and tune it to A, and then tune the A string of a violin to the same note, and compare the force of the two sounds. The one merely moves the air by its own unaided swing, which owing to the thinness of the string it can only do to a very limited extent, and consequently emits but a feeble sound ; the other gives forth a full round tone, with which the first will not bear comparison. The instrument, by the vibration of its belly, sound-post and back, reinforces the weak tone of the string, and the peculiar quality which secures this end is called resonance." Now vocal sound is caused by the passage of air from the lungs through the larynx, setting the vocal chords in motion as it passes. These vocal chords have their analogy in the string mentioned

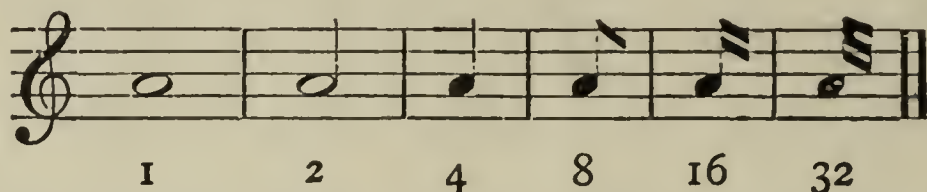
in the quotation. But this is not all. The chest, mouth, nose, and palate, must play their part in reinforcing the sound ; these answer to the sound-post and body of the violin. You will therefore see that unless these are properly regulated, the tone produced will be faulty. The chief point to remember is : that there should be a clear passage, with no obstruction to the tone by throat, tongue, or teeth. The mouth must be well opened, and a clear forward tone must be insisted upon ; feeble and inferior tone is often accounted for by bad resonance, and sounds become more or less clear, sonorous or robust, in proportion to the space in which they vibrate. The clear forward tone just mentioned need not, indeed must not, involve any strain or exertion. The throat must be quite supple, in fact, if the tone is not produced without visible effort, and quite freely, it will be unsatisfactory.

"Ah," is certainly the vowel for producing the best resonance, and chiefly on this account I urged its use and practice to follow that of "oo." On the vowel sound "ah," with a good forward tone, a boy's voice should be resonant, clear and ringing, especially so on the high notes of his compass.

Mr. H. Deacon says : "The vowel "A" (ah) right pronounced, gives a position of the resonance-chambers most free from impediment, in which the entire volume of air vibrates without after-neutralisation, and consequently communicates its vibrations in their integrity to the outer air ; this therefore is the best preparation, the best starting point for the formation of other vowels." (Illustration).

Rudiments.—We now come to the question of teaching the rudiments of music to choir boys, and here I shall of course be met by the choirmaster I have mentioned so often, who will tell me it is impossible to include this in his two practices a week. A few scales and arpeggi are the utmost he can attempt, having new music to prepare for Sunday services. In reply to this, I contend that it is of the utmost importance that boys however rough should know something of the subject they have in hand, and not sing like parrots in total ignorance. With proper method, which is all important, the time absorbed in this would be so small that no choirmaster should shirk it. For learning the names of the notes, the old "Memoria Technica," "E, G, B, D, F, every good boy deserves favour" ; "F, A, C, E, spells face," can be learnt without much mental effort, and the information will be invaluable as the boy advances. The value of rests, dotted notes, #, ♭, ♯, ~ (tie or bind), and a few Italian expression marks, can be learnt in the course of the music studied.

Time.—Teaching time will take a little longer, but with method such as the following (I have only time to indicate it briefly) it need not be a great worry. You must show the boys some chart of the value of notes to start with.

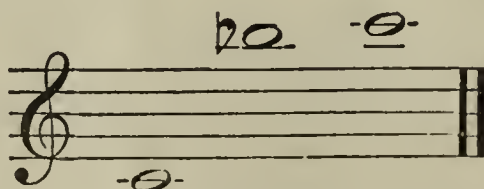


explaining with the names of the notes how many of each are contained in a whole note or semibreve. Having made sure that this knowledge is fully grasped, you have only to explain that when any one of these numbers is seen as the bottom number of the time signature, it means that there are a certain number of these notes corresponding to it in the bar, the top number showing how many. Thus $\frac{3}{4}$, $\frac{6}{8}$, $\frac{9}{16}$, &c. can be distinguished at a glance in this way.

Remember that now-a-days the roughest boys learn far harder things than this at school every day. There is no difficulty in the subject if well taught. Then later on, as occasion may require, it will be a simple matter to teach duple and triple time, and their respective compounds, even for the hard pressed choirmaster whom I have in mind. Happily it will not be so necessary in the future for a choirmaster to find time for this, as rudiments are being increasingly taught in National schools.

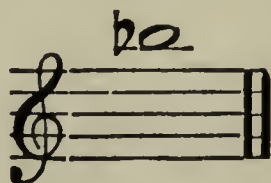
All this information is very necessary, but it must be remembered that the chief object in learning time is to understand and observe where the accents come in a bar. Strict time cannot be said to exist without due cognizance of this fact. For instance $\frac{6}{8}$ time must by the youngest boys be known and treated as compound duple (viz : with two accents in a bar), $\frac{9}{8}$ as compound triple (three accents), and so forth. When this is really grasped and acted upon, how different the result from the slipshod, timeless singing one hears ; no accents to speak of, no attack, no swing ! I shall have to enlarge on this in Lecture 2.

Compass.—The real compass of an ordinary boy's voice is from middle C to B flat or C

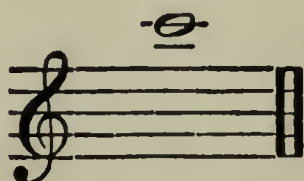


But do not imagine for a moment that an untrained boy will be able to sing all these notes, or be aware of possessing them. Probably his own idea of the limit of his compass will be the

highest note to which he can screw up his chest register. Boys are often ignorant that they can sing with any other, and their surprise and delight, when they discover their own head notes, are amusing to witness. Sir George Martin assures us "that it is a common error to suppose that boys' voices are lower in compass than those of women who sing the same part. Exceptional cases will occasionally be met with, but as a rule almost all trained boys can reach B flat,



in chorus, and even C



is not an impossible note for them."

In practising it is advisable to leave extreme notes quite alone at first; begin on a fairly high note, say F, well within the head register, and work gradually downwards. Direct your attention chiefly to the middle of the voice, and by developing these notes the extremes will also be strengthened. If any high passage must be practised, it should be done as lightly as possible, and always "*m.p.*" Sometimes it is a help to boys in getting high notes, to let them drop their chin slightly, and as it were get behind the note. (Illustration).

Scales.—I hope it is unnecessary to emphasise the importance of the daily practice of scales whenever possible. They are useful as exercises in breathing, equality of tone, and intonation, alike for beginners and advanced vocalists.

Major Scales.—The major scales must, of course, be taught first, and, as I have already recommended, downwards, for the sake of getting the right production. This will be doubly necessary where your beginner is rough and uncultivated. But the moment a boy is absolutely safe in his head production, there is every reason why scales should be practised upwards as well as downwards. Upward scales are more difficult to sing smoothly, and tempt the singer to more waste of breath. On this account they are all the more valuable, and should be made a great deal of. The scales should also be practised crescendo in going up, and diminuendo in coming down, and *vice versa*. The best vowel to use is "ah," but should you find that it produces any tendency to throw the voice back into the throat, by

all means keep to "oo" until this is conquered. "Koo" is sometimes recommended, but I think the consonant "k" is apt to cause a slight compression of the throat, the very evil we are trying to avoid.

Na, Na
Ta, Ta

Legato.

Or, Na
Ta

The same scales to the sounds "na" and "ta," both legato and staccato, will be found useful varieties. In all these exercises our choirmaster must be content with playing simple and straightforward chords in the accompaniment. On no account play each note the boys sing, unless to pull them up when singing out of tune. We want to train and guide the boy's ear, and to this end the slighter the accompaniment the better.

(Illustration.)

Minor Scales.—As the boys advance, do not omit a very important point, one which is not half enough advocated in my opinion, *i.e.* the minor scale, both harmonic and melodic. These are much harder to sing than the major. In the harmonic mode that awkward interval the augmented second will be good practice, and in the melodic, the fact of going up by one series of steps and coming down by another will stimulate a boy's intelligence and train his ear. To get both these minor scales in perfect tune is a fine ear test. (Illustration.)

Chromatic Scale.—There is yet another point which I would urge for more advanced boys, viz. chromatic scales. To get these semitones in good tune requires concentration of mind in directing the voice, and if chromatic scales are once well mastered, chromatic intervals (in Spohr's music for instance) will be robbed of much of their terror. (Illustration.)

Arpeggi.—The singing of arpeggi of both major and minor chords is one of the best tests of vocalisation, and as a rule is much neglected. They should be sung twice over, the first time an even "forte," the second time an even "piano." A natural

tendency is to crescendo, and hurry in going up to the top note ; but the chief object of arpeggi is to obtain an even quality of tone and pace throughout the entire compass : this is much harder to achieve. An easy legato should be insisted upon, the notes well joined, but not slurred together. To vary the treatment, "do, re, mi," etc., according to the moveable "do" system, might be sung instead of "la" or "ah." In addition to the common chord of the key, the following will be found useful as exercises :—



Solfeggi.—One of the best methods of learning new music, whether hymns, chants, anthems, or services, is by the use of solfeggio. It refines pronunciation, ensures good tone, and the mind not being diverted by grappling with strange words, full attention can be given to the notes. I think without going beyond the limits of the weekly work of a choir, plenty of new material will be found for solfeggio practice, but should more be desired, Concone's two books are inimitable, and will take most boys as far as they need go in this direction. The exercises by Sir John Stainer to be found in Sir George Martin's "Choir Boy Training," and such set pieces, to be sung by the boys all together, as "Let the bright seraphim," are most excellent. Of course, I am aware that when time is limited, it will not be possible to practise all these exercises, scales, arpeggi, and solfeggi at one time, nor in the interest of the boys' voices is it desirable, but a little of it is an absolute necessity. We might almost look upon it as the inevitable "tuning up" before the rehearsal. The choirmaster must use his own judgment in making an interesting, useful, and well varied selection from practice to practice. I feel that I cannot close this lecture better than by quoting the wise remarks of Sir John Stainer on this very point : "These studies are intended not so much to lead up to difficulties, as to take the pupil over and above them, so that he shall descend, or let himself down, to what, under other circumstances, would prove insurmountable obstacles."

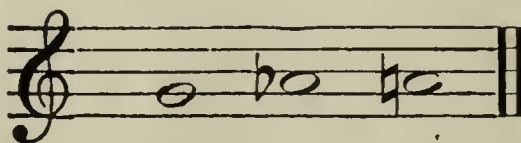
(Illustration.)

LECTURE II.

Monotoning—Intonation—Forcing the Voice—Flexibility—Pronunciation—Articulation—Chanting (Anglican)—Hymns—Phrasing—Reading at Sight—Expression—Time and Rhythm—Attack—Breaking of a Boy's Voice.

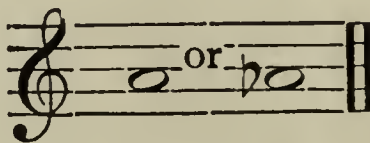
In this Lecture we must assume that our boy has broken up the ground of voice production. So now let us turn our attention to the various parts of the service that he will be required to sing.

Monotoning.—Let us first deal with monotoning. By whatever method a boy is trained, I should always advise monotoning in the *head* voice. The usual notes for monotoning are G, A flat, and A,

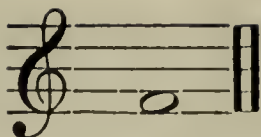


which occur at the most awkward point. It is here that those teachers who use chest and head registers make the break. If the chest voice is used, there will always be an effort to keep up the pitch. Now, as we established in my former Lecture, "the carrying down of a register causes no fatigue." Therefore if the head voice is insisted upon, not only will the tone be sweetened and softened, but physical effort being reduced to a minimum, the pitch will be more easily maintained. I recommend any choirmaster to try this experiment on the note A, to be convinced that the head production is the most advisable.

I do not think a very low note in monotoning is effective,



are the most satisfactory from all points of view, and especially if the head production is used. The very low note which is adopted in some churches for the Confession, though it enables the congregation to join in, in a low mumbling voice, is in my opinion a failure musically, and not impressive from a religious standpoint. It makes it possible for those not possessed of a good ear to indulge in any note they please. If the Confession is monotoned on F



reverently, and the words not given in too boisterous a style, the effect should be of the most solemn kind and suitable to the words. Either this, or let it be read. Monotoning should be taken at a decided measured pace, with the utmost precision, each word uttered by all the voices at the same moment. The slipshod effect of words pronounced anyhow, without any regard to ensemble, though only too common, is to my mind irreverent and inartistic. It is just as important to monotone in time, that is, at some uniform pace, with due regard to punctuation, emphasis, and simultaneous breathing, as it is to sing a set piece of music in the same manner. A good general rule for beginning the Confession or Lord's Prayer is that the clergyman should start monotoning alone, and the choir join in after the first words have been said, "Almighty and most merciful Father," "Our Father" by repeating them, and then all should go along together. Unless you have some understanding of this kind, how ragged is the effect!

At the end of a monotone, so as to ensure a simultaneous Amen, it is a good plan to have a definite number of beats for the last syllable of the last word, practised, understood, and observed by the whole choir. This is surely better than for all the parts to wait for the signal from some one deep bass voice, the choir then taking up the note as they think they will, by no means with one consent. For instance "For ever and ever . . . Amen." The syllable "er" of "ever" should be held for two beats, then there will be no doubt as to all the voices taking up the Amen together. Here let me observe that a drawled out Amen of indefinite length is a mistake. You will find that two beats of moderate length on each syllable will be quite enough, all closing their lips at the same moment.

Bad Intonation.—Before we proceed further, I think we must devote a few moments to a subject which has been the worry of many choirmasters, namely bad intonation. One of the chief causes of this failing is a defective ear. This made me so emphatic in Lecture 1, on the necessity of refusing a boy admission to the choir whose ear was not good. Any who sing out of tune without knowing it must be considered hopeless for our purpose. Undoubtedly there are cases of a defective ear being much improved, but if a choirmaster has been so taken by a good voice as to admit the boy into his choir in spite of it, he must be prepared to find that he has let himself in for a good deal of extra trouble.

But this is by no means the only cause. Bad intonation will result when the voice is overworked and when the boy is badly fed, delicate or lazy. The two chief causes however which the choirmaster will have to attend to, are the following :—

1. Slovenliness, *i.e.* singing with mouth half shut and breath half taken.
2. Forcing the chest voice upwards beyond its proper limit. This second reason will be found the usual cause of flat singing in many badly trained choirs. This is easy to understand, when we remember the amount of physical effort required to keep the chest voice up, compared with the ease with which the head voice can be brought down. I do not know a more distressing sight or sound, than boys purple in the face, getting hoarser and harsher every moment, struggling to sustain at its proper pitch, with the chest voice, a note which I consider should be sung in the head register.

The reciting notes of chants are very apt to lie round the notes of the break. This sometimes causes flat singing, but it will be obviated when only the head voice is used.

Forcing the Voice.—Never be deluded into forcing the voice in the hope of increasing its strength. “Work for quality, and power will take care of itself.” This is advice that must be taken very seriously to heart.

Forcing the voice also leads to singing sharp. I think we may lay it down as a rule never to force the voice under any circumstances : as Baedeker so neatly remarks in his guide book for mountaineering “Where fatigue begins, enjoyment ceases,” in this case the enjoyment of performer and audience. Apart from straining to produce power, there is a good deal of unconscious voice forcing that has to be guarded against in choir singing. I think it will interest you to hear what Henry Deacon says on this point : “It is well known that a voice in unison with several others becomes almost entirely neutralized as far as the possessor’s consciousness is concerned. The singer’s voice goes to swell the volume of sound, but cannot be heard by its owner, and the result is an amount of perhaps unintentional forcing that leaves him vocally exhausted at the end of the chorus. Those whose existence depends upon their voice will not allow their enthusiasm to carry them beyond their powers, as those do who join a chorus for the love of the thing.”

Flexibility.—Besides what I have said above as to tone, forcing the voice will have another disastrous effect, viz :—the

destruction of all chance of flexibility. Forcing notes in the extremes of the compass is also the greatest mistake. As the muscles gain flexibility these extremes develop themselves naturally, while any forcing at once arrests this development. I will go so far as to say that proper flexibility cannot be obtained unless the voice is able to sustain a note with ease, and with good production. No florid passage could be executed with anything like a pure *legato* unless the voice were flexible, and of course all ornaments without it would be difficult and inelastic. Flexibility never means, as some appear to think, that one note may run into another. Every note should be clear, crisp, and distinct.

Pronunciation.—I will now discuss the subject of pronunciation, and to us English, as we shall see, it ought to be a more engrossing study than we make it. We have already enforced in Lecture 1, the necessity of “do, re, mi” practice from the very first. If this has been rightly insisted upon, the difficulties of pronunciation later on will be considerably reduced. Pronunciation as required in singing comes under two heads:—Articulation (the work of the consonants); Vocalisation (the work of the vowels). As Henry Deacon remarks: “No nation in the civilized world speaks its language as badly as we do. Familiar conversation is carried on in inarticulate smudges of sound, which are allowed to pass current for something. Not only are we as a rule inarticulate, but our tone production is wretched, and when English people begin to study singing, they are astonished to find that they have never learnt to speak. In singing there is scarcely a letter of our language, that has not its special defect, or defects, amongst nearly all amateurs, and sad to say, among some artists. An Italian has but to open his mouth, and if he have a voice, its passage from the larynx to the outer air is prepared by his language. We, on the other hand, have to study hard before we arrive at the Italian’s starting point.” This depressing account of our language, shows how hard we English ought to work in the matter of pronunciation, and moreover, that a certain amount of Italianizing of English vowels is a necessity.

One of the chief difficulties, which singing masters have to contend with here in England, is lazy speaking. People will not move their lips in speaking, still less in singing, unless this point is strongly urged. On this Henry Deacon also remarks that, “peculiarity and indistinctness of pronunciation are two great and well known barriers to the adequate enjoyment of vocal music.” Of course, different parts of the country speak English so differently, that the countryman’s burr and the

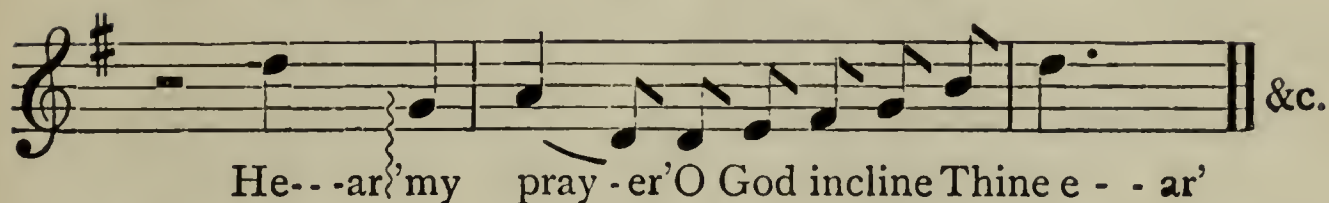
cockney's twang have to be dealt with, each in its own special way. This matter should on no account be left to chance, and can be most effectually cured by making the boys read the defective passage before attempting to sing it. How often have we heard: "Oi wited for the Lord," "O come all ye fithful." The absence of h's too, such as, "'Ark, 'ark, my soul." Londoners are apt to think themselves superior, but the countryman's "Web'seech Thee t'yurr us gud Lurrd," is no worse than the above. Let us remember a language is in a great measure what a singer makes it.

Consonants.—Consonants are never made enough of, and rarely properly finished. Exaggeration on this point can hardly exist. At the further end of a large building over-emphasized speech in singing sounds merely normal; so when words are clipped off, or not thoroughly finished, they are perfectly indistinguishable. The musical effect in choral singing often depends upon the vigorous enunciation of the words. Hardly any consonant is capable of over-pronunciation, except "s." All we like sheep." "Spare us, good Lord." This sibilant sound is so penetrating, and it is so literally true that a little goes a long way, that in discussing pronunciation I cannot avoid alluding to it. With this attention to consonants, we must be the more careful to insist that all voices should quit them at the same moment. For instance, "Spare us, good Lord-d-d-d," . . "And with Thy Spirit-t-t-t." I should like here to quote a favourite expression of Sir Joseph Barnby's, "No ragged ends!" If these remarks are true for vigorous singing, how much truer are they for piano effects, which we usually hear utterly marred by indistinctness. All choristers will need impressing with the fact that more lip movement is necessary for clear, soft singing, than for loud.

Common Faults.—The most common faults to be guarded against are the following:—

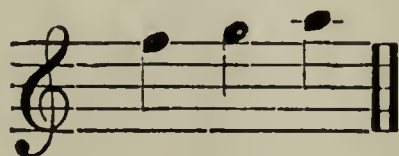
1. The running of one word into another, the result of slovenly lip-movement. "Let us heartily rejoice" in the Venite: how seldom is this clear!
2. The last letter of a word tacked on to the beginning of the next: "Incline our hearts to keep thi' slaw."
3. When the same letter ends one word and begins the next, it is made to do duty for both: "Let no' them tha' trust in Thee be confounded."
4. The elision of little words: "Glory be to Father"; "As it was in beginning."
5. Never allow the lips to fall out of position before the full

value of the note is reached. It is at the very end of the note that the word should be completed, *e.g.* :



Bad pronunciation, especially of the vowels, often interferes with the resonance of the voice. It is a fatal mistake to neglect good enunciation; nothing carries the tone of a voice further, besides making the whole difference to the pleasure of the auditor.


Sacrifice of words for tone.—Many choirmasters, in order to secure a good tone on a word that is not easy to pronounce, sacrifice pronunciation. If, as I have said before, all vowels have been well practised, there will not be this need to mangle the word for the sake of the tone. Of course, I must admit that a good tone is easier to produce with some vowel sounds than others, particularly with high notes; *e.g.* “meek” or “sleep” on F, G, A, is difficult:—

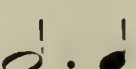
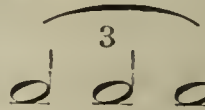






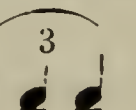


The modification of the vowel sound, however, will not be so marked when solfeggi have been thoroughly mastered.

Psalter.—A word or two about the Psalter may not be out of place, before we discuss chanting. My remarks on this are taken from “Readings on the Psalms addressed to Choristers,” by the Rev. H. Housman. “The Psalter is a collection of the sacred poetry of the Hebrews, known by the general name of the Psalms of David. The Psalms are divided into five distinct books, the close of each division being marked by a solemn doxology, followed by a single or double Amen. The Psalms were not collected together and arranged in these five books all at once. Before the Psalter arrived at the English version it passed through two main stages—the Greek and the Latin. The very first part of the Bible which was translated into the native tongue of England was the Psalter, and it was introduced in its original state into the first English Prayer Book, A.D. 1549, and it has been retained unaltered in every succeeding edition of the Book of Common Prayer. As years went on, the belief strengthened that the English Psalter had given rise to a new school of chanting, and that as Gregorian music had been the vehicle of Latin devotion, so, for the future, must the Angli-

can be that of English. Founded by such composers as Tallis (died 1585), Farrant, and Byrd, the Anglican school took root in a manner so decided as to prove how suitable it was to the soil."

Chanting.—This leads us on to the important subject of Chanting. And here the force of what I have already said as to pronunciation will be felt more than in any other part of the service. It will often save your time in the end, if you have a difficult verse *read over* beforehand. The singing of the Psalms is I consider the hardest part of the service, and often goes the worst. It requires an immense amount of careful practice, more than is usually given to it, and is quite a test of a good choir. Sir John Stainer says "that the form of the chant has been the real cause of the difficulties of pointing. An ordinary melodic sentence consists of 2, 4, or 8 bars, but the chant has first 3, and then 4 bars. This peculiarity does not, however, offend the ear so much as the eye." As sound and as helpful a book as I know, is the Cathedral *Paragraph* Psalter. On this and on the *Cathedral* Psalter I shall base my remarks. I do not propose to deal with Gregorians. Chanting is divided into two parts, recitation, and the rhythmical part or melody; and as the Cathedral *Paragraph* Psalter observes in its preface, "the two main difficulties consist, first in securing the deliberate and audible enunciation of the words which go to the recitation note, and secondly, in connecting smoothly the free recitation with the rhythmical part of the chant." Perhaps I had better give an illustration of a verse in the *Cathedral* Psalter, as that seems to be in general use. Psalm xcv. 4, "In His hands are all the corners of the earth." This corresponds to the chant as follows: the recitation goes as far as the syllable "cor," and at this syllable the rhythmical part of the chant begins. The word "corners" corresponds to the first semibreve of the music, and is therefore of two beats duration. The following words correspond with the remaining bars of the music, and are very easily understood. There are many ways of dividing up the semibreve at the beginning of the melody: two minims, ; dotted

minim and crotchet, ; triplet of minims, ; crotchet and dotted minim, ; minim and two crotchets, ; two crotchets and minim, ; crotchet, minim, crotchet, ; four crotchets, ; or their equivalent, viz.  or 

The Cathedral Paragraph Psalter gives an illustration of each of these divisions in page 8 of the preface, but beyond alluding to the book for those who like to investigate the matter, I think I need not describe them in detail. This method of dividing up the semibreve by actual notes written over the words, is a great help to a choirmaster, and should the *Cathedral* Psalter be in use in his church, he will do well to possess his own copy of the *Cathedral Paragraph* Psalter, and consult it whenever he comes across a doubtful piece of pointing. It is only in very few verses that these two Psalters disagree.

We must now proceed to the right method of teaching chanting to an ignorant choir, who probably have never heard it well done. Chants in a low key are rather a snare to boys; if you find they shout with the chest voice, a good plan is to transpose the chant into a higher key, where they will be unable to do so.

Rhythmical Part.—In the rhythmical portion of the chant, absolutely strict time must be insisted upon, and with this view I would suggest that the choirmaster should not practise the whole verse, but begin at the accent, or at the point where the melody may be said to begin, and count strict time, two beats in a bar, throughout the psalm.



(Psalm i.) stood in the | way of | sinners



sat in the | seat | of the | scornful.

In this way he can insist that there shall be no pause between the verses, each side taking up its note strictly to time; and the choir will learn how to keep the psalm going with a proper swing. Unless this is clearly taught and made a great deal of at choir practice, a choirmaster need never hope to have the psalms sung with anything like unanimity. (Illustration.)

Having established the proper rendering of the rhythmical part of a chant, let us consider the recitation. Here I must again quote from the *Cathedral Paragraph* Psalter. "In order to obviate all need of hurry in recitation, and indeed to prevent it if possible, the words which go to the recitation note have been divided by means of asterisks into phrases which can reasonably be taken in one breath. At the asterisk, wherever it occurs, a slight break should be made. Punctuation should not be observed in a slavish, stilted, pedantic fashion, but as

an intelligent reader would observe it, letting the observance be perceptible by the audience, but not obtruding it upon their notice."

Acting upon these valuable suggestions, I would urge that the recitation should be read aloud several times with good articulation, if it is found to be badly sung; but in any case this will do no harm.

Evenness of pace is of course a great desideratum, but I am not quite prepared to go the length of some authorities in giving equal value to each syllable. It is not natural, it would be very bad in reading, and does not tend to clearness of comprehension. I have heard this done, and there is a certain flavour of the common patter song which does not appeal to my taste for church music. What I believe to be the proper method is: that the natural slight emphasis on certain words or syllables, as in speaking, should be observed. Do not confuse slight emphasis with an *accent*, which would produce a most jerky and uneven effect, and is not at all to be recommended. Starting with the axiom that the words of the recitation must be perfectly clear and never hurried, a golden rule for finding the proper pace is, that it never should go beyond what is required for correctly articulating and finishing *every* syllable. Having now practised your choir into clear enunciation of the recitation, you will experience difficulty in joining this smoothly and evenly on to the rhythmical part. Where the join comes, a slight accent on the word or syllable cannot be avoided, but a common fault is to over-accentuate this word; its position musically will give it quite enough emphasis. It is very often unduly prominent and made a kind of rallying point, while the recitation is gabbled through, resembling nothing so much as a preliminary run before a jump.

Writing on this subject, Sir John Stainer says: "The principal object to be aimed at in pointing, is the apportioning out of the emphasis of the words to be sung, after the manner that an eloquent speaker would recite them; but as sentences are capable of as many accents, more or less sensible, as there are words, diversity of opinion on the subject is not to be wondered at."

With reference to the foregoing rules, the Cathedral Paragraph Psalter reminds us: "that written signs in their very nature indicate but imperfectly the expressive elasticity which intelligence and feeling demand. They are too often applied and observed with a dull mechanical precision, which in all music, especially in chanting, where free recitation is closely combined

with strict rhythm, is fatal to proper and pleasing effect. In truth the arts of chanting and pointing, like other arts, if they are to be perfected, must be exercised with brains."

Now let me give a few helpful hints on special points :—It will be found of use in keeping the choir together, to insist that all "eds" should be pronounced as a separate syllable: delivered, not deliver'd; rejoiced, not rejoic'd. Psalms should be chanted "m.f." as a general rule, not to be exceeded without special mark. Commas should be observed, but only as in good reading; they are generally made much too long. When occurring after the accent they should be ignored. Penitential Psalms must not be very slow or dragged. In practising it will be found a good plan to make every two boys sing a verse round the choir, this will both find out the unsteady chanters and give the other boys a rest.

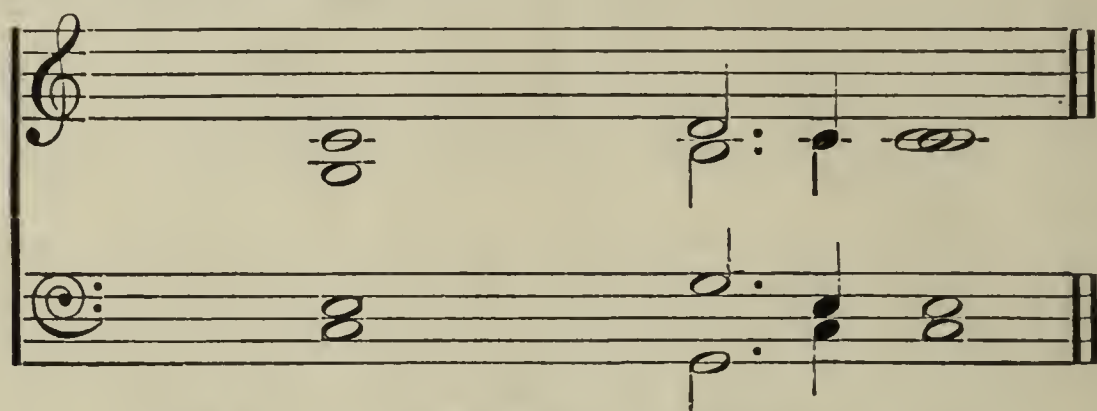
Alternative Chanting.—There seem to be three methods of alternative chanting in vogue. First, Decani and Cantoris singing alternate verses. Second, with a double chant, each side two verses. Third, dividing each verse into two, each side singing half a verse, according to the antiphonal structure of the psalms. The first is the method generally adopted, and I think, looking at it all round, produces the best musical effect. Second, the only reason that I can see in favour of this is, that the double chant is completed by the one side of the choir. Third, the effect of the frequent changing from side to side is restless, unless done to absolute perfection. Whichever method be adopted, there must on no account be any pause made between the verses.

Chants.—In your choice of chants the capabilities of your choir must be your guide; but always observe one rule, that in making a change from one chant to another the keys should be related. To have two chants in the same key is monotonous, but to have two in totally disconnected keys, is inartistic. Single chants are, in my opinion, too often used for long psalms. There may be valid literary reasons for this, but the effect is very tedious and tiresome to listen to, and I feel that a change should somehow be made, if only to another single chant, contriving this with due regard to the sentiment of the words.

Let us take an example, Day 28, Evening Psalms, as set in the Cathedral Chant Book. First, a single chant for 27 verses, then the same chant with a few notes altered, changed into the tonic minor for the second psalm with 9 verses. Then a return to the first single chant for the remaining psalm of 8 verses. This does not include the two verses of the "Gloria" at the end

of each psalm. This selection of single chants, whether to the musical or otherwise, must be very monotonous. To those who wish to go intelligently into the subject of psalm treatment, I could not recommend a more fascinating study than Dean Perowne's "Book of Psalms," where their history, formation, and development are dealt with in a most scholarly manner.

Responses.—Before we leave the subject of chanting, let me suggest that some of the Ferial responses should be pointed in a similar way, for instance :—

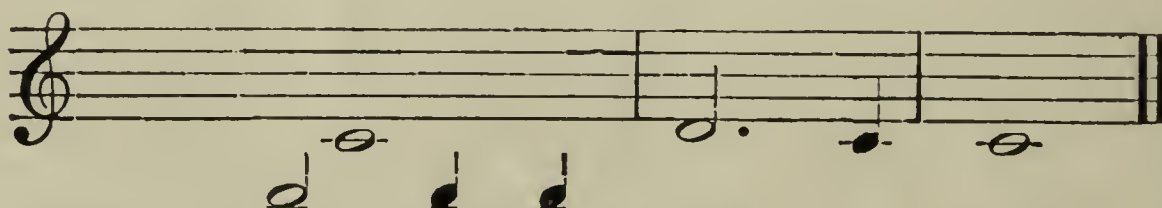


And our mouth shall shew forth Thy praise.

The reciting part: "And our mouth shall shew" never goes properly together for want of this. I would suggest that the rhythmical part begin on the word "mouth," which is to be made a minim, "shall shew" being two crotchets:



mouth shall shew | etc.; bar it as follows, and count two minims as in a psalm.



And our | mouth shall shew | forth... Thy praise.

This suggestion can be worked out for the words of any response that may not go smoothly and well together. There are many responses scattered through the various services in the Prayer Book, which would sound much better if they were definitely pointed in this way.

Hymns.—I will now proceed to hymn singing, which should be within the powers of every church however humble. It will be interesting and instructive to know something about the origin of hymns, and I here quote from Sir John Stainer's

studies in the subject. "The period of the Reformation was one of great musical activity. For some time previous a quiet and half conscious preparation had been going on, in the circulation among the people of popular hymns and their tunes in the vernacular, of course only sung in private. When Luther furnished his followers with metrical versions of the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and other portions of the old Office Books, there were no bounds to the popularity of both hymns and tunes. Edition followed edition under the title of "Geistliche Lieder," etc."; and as Rockstro tells us: "The Vernacular Hymn found its way to the heart of the German people. The Chorale was sung far and wide, and at last under the treatment of J. S. Bach, its beauties were developed with a depth of insight into its harmonic and melodic resources, which is not likely ever to be surpassed." From these Titanic ancestors our modern hymn tunes are undoubtedly descended. Whether they are worthy descendants, it is not our present purpose to discuss. It is the duty of all choirmasters to render at least three or four hymns every Sunday, and to see that the utmost is made of them in intelligence, reverence and music. We may dismiss the idea of some excellent people, who limit the art of hymn singing, to making a "joyful noise." That loud, expressionless, irreverent race through hymns, which is so often disguised and excused as "hearty singing," is rightly denounced by Dr. Troutbeck as most objectionable. On the other hand that mawkish, sentimental drawl, which lingers on favourite words, and slackens down to express grief or emotion, is equally to be condemned.

Pace.—It is impossible to lay down any hard and fast rule as to the pace of hymns; tastes differ so on this; but a good and safe guide will be that they should never drag, but go at a steady swing. Hymns in triple time will want special care as to pace, to avoid any resemblance to a "valse." The same rule holds good with double force in the stately, broad, dignified German chorales. Any hurry of these utterly ruins their character, and destroys their impressiveness. For instance: "Now thank we all our God," 379, A. & M.; "O sinner lift the eye of faith," 104, A. & M.; "Rejoice to-day with one accord," 378, A. & M., etc.

Processional Hymns.—The pace of Processional Hymns to be effective, must be at a slower rate than others. At the same time anything funereal is a mistake, and the slower the choir get, the more liable are they to fall to pieces. A very steady, stately four in a bar is what is required. Always oppose, if you can, having any hymn as a processional which is vague and uncertain in time; that is to say, which contains pauses or

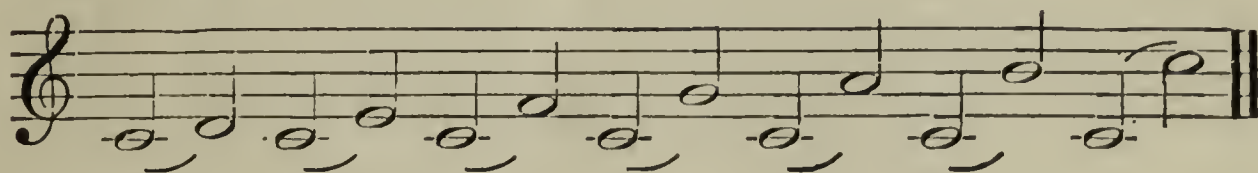
other indefinite marks. These can never be made a thorough success. The first verse should always be sung in unison as the procession starts; this seems to give the pace with a more marked swing than if the choir began in harmony.

Phrasing.—One of the most important things overlooked in hymn singing is phrasing. The popular and customary idea that breath should always be taken at the end of a line, and nowhere else, is an utter fallacy. It ruins the sense of the words as often as not. “Jesus lives, no longer now.” “Our blest Redeemer ere He breathed.” “O Saviour may we never rest.” “How blest the matron who endued.” These few examples will be enough to show what absurdities this habit brings about. The clergy are not above sinning in this respect in giving out the hymn. The double bar in the music often causes a misapprehension. Of course it has nothing to do with the close of a sentence of the words, but merely shows the end of a line. You will no doubt ask, When is breath to be taken? The only satisfactory answer is: Wherever you would take breath in proper and intelligent reading. For instance: “Our blest Redeemer, ere He breathed His tender last farewell.” Breath should be taken of course after the word Redeemer. Hymns will never be well sung by a choir, men or boys, till they are properly understood. Very little attention is, as a rule, given to the words as compared with the music, the result being that the sense is either marred or not brought out at all. In the Hymn 160, A. & M., “Holy, Holy, Holy,” this repetition is intentional, as emblematic of the Holy Trinity, and the whole point of the hymn is lost, if these three words be hurried through, or the commas not observed. You must in all hymn singing mark the important words. Take for instance Hymn 203, last verse,

p. Thee, my Master, and my Friend,
f. Vindicated and enthroned,
cr. Unto earth’s remotest end
 Glorified, adored and own’d.

[The climax of the whole hymn is contained in the last verse, and the ideas it expresses must be well brought out both by clear articulation, and phrasing. Without due emphasis (not over accent) on the words, Master, Friend, Vindicated, Enthroned, and all the last line, and observation of commas, *i.e.* proper phrasing, the effect will be exceedingly tame. This hymn is a capital test of intelligent singing. (Illustration.)

Reading at sight.—Now I must say something on reading at sight. To be a good sight reader is, of course, a high attainment, and much cannot be expected of beginners. An exercise like the following—



is a good start, and helps them to think of each interval as it occurs in the major scale, if it is properly explained. Chants and hymns may be utilized with double results if the “do, re, mi,” is taught from the staff notation. By double results I here mean that the boys have a capital exercise in sight reading, and learn the tune into the bargain. In tackling the simplest music, too much importance is given to making the boys learn it by ear. Far better would it be to make them look at their music, and learn it by eye. Unfortunately, at the present time, our choir boys who come from National schools, while frequently taught sol-fa notation excellently, are never shown how to apply that knowledge to the staff. In this respect I believe that choirmasters may greatly lighten this part of their work, if they teach their boys on the method advocated by the Incorporated Staff-Sight-Singing College. In this system the boy has from the outset to sing from the staff, and thus loses no time. It seems a sad waste to find our choir boys possessed only of a knowledge of sol-fa notation, when, if that knowledge had been applied to the staff, it would prove such a valuable help, not only to the choir boy, but also to the future choir *man*. In this new method the rudiments are all taught, as they ought to be, in actual practice, and not as theoretical facts. If the choir-master will thus teach his boys to sing the rudiments, instead of merely explaining them, he will find such teaching, not only more interesting to the pupils, but also far more useful to them. Sir Frederick Bridge’s “Rudiments in Rhyme,” will well repay anyone who adopts it for his boys. The intelligent teaching of sight-singing for ten minutes once a week, especially to the probationers, will be of great benefit to the choir-master in lightening his labours of teaching new music to his choristers, and so leave much more time for finesse and expression. Time will not admit of my going very deeply into this subject, but to those desirous of looking into this branch of their work, I warmly recommend the Manuals of Sight Singing issued by the Council of the Incorporated Staff-Sight-Singing College. In these they will find the subject treated in the most concise and

complete manner; and it is interesting to recollect that this institution was founded at the wish of that great choirmaster, the late Sir John Stainer.

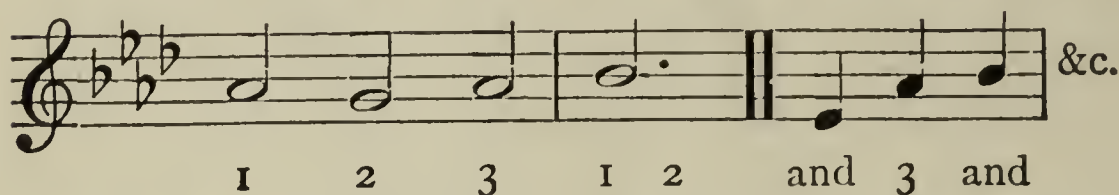
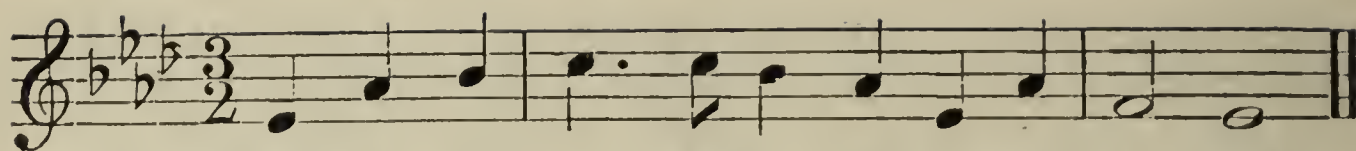
Expression.—In opening this wide field I cannot do better than again quote Henry Deacon. He says: "What are we to understand by this much abused word? A generally accepted meaning is a series of aimless, ill-proportioned crescendos and diminuendos, rallentandos and accellerandos, with a constant apparent disposition to cry. Expression, if only from its etymology, means a manifestation of the thought and feeling passing within." Of course with choir boys any "thought and feeling passing within," is extremely rare. It may be occasionally one's pleasant lot to train a boy who has real feeling, who is responsive, quick and sympathetic; but with all these lovely qualities, even he will be unable to portray them unless he has the proper tone production at his command. And how uncommon is this musical boy in any case! As a rule we must face the fact that any expression in a boy's singing will have to come indirectly from the choirmaster, the boy being only the medium. All shades of expression from *p* to *f* can be secured far more easily with the use of the head voice, than with that of the inflexible chest register. Untrained boys do not understand what soft singing is, and until this is acquired a satisfactory *forte* cannot be attained; it will be nothing but a shout. Good loud singing should be only a development of soft, therefore it follows that unless they can sing *piano* properly, they cannot sing *forte*. Exaggerated effects in music are certainly an evil of the day. Any sensationalism or overdone pictorial effects are surely out of place in church. Expression marks must be attended to carefully and minutely, but any excess should be immediately checked in the cause of music, dignity, and reverence. The patent fact is often forgotten that the mark "crescendo" implies beginning softly. A choir singing at the top of their voices have no power of crescendo. Again, if you want an effective *sf*, an *mf* should follow immediately, in order that the full effect of the accent may be felt.

Time.—In exaggerated musical expression, nothing suffers so much as time. The gift of strict time is a much rarer one than that of tune, and therefore should have more cultivation. This unfortunately it is far from receiving. The old custom of each voice in a choir having to sing from his own separate part, without being able to see the other parts, made it a necessity for him to count his time carefully. But now-a-days, with our cheap complete copies, he can see where to come in by looking

at the other parts, without troubling himself to count his own bars of rest. And as far as keeping time is concerned, this is no gain. One of the commonest errors of the day is to assume that *soft* is synonymous with *slow*. This is such a general tendency with all vocalists that it needs constant correction. One of the most beautiful choral effects in my opinion, is "*pp*" singing in *strict* time. How seldom do we hear it! The absurdly slow pace at which some reponses are taken, often compels the choir to take breath at a wrong place. "And take not Thy holy Spirit from us," with a mistaken idea of reverence, is usually drawled out to such a length, that breathing after the word "holy" is inevitable, though of course quite wrong. This excessive slowness does not add to the impressiveness of the words, and very often ends out of tune, and ragged.

Indefinite Marks of Time. Pause.--Indefinite time marks, such as pauses and rallentandos, are the most difficult things to contend with without a conductor. If you want to have any success with a pause, there must be some definite understanding established as to its definite length. A good plan is to add one, two, or even three beats to the given value of the note, as only in this way can you ensure the choir all leaving off together.

Rallentando.—As this means *gradually* slower, it is more difficult still. Wherever possible, adopt in its place "*ritenuto*," which means slower at once. The constant introduction of rallentandos throughout the service is a very serious blot; and as regards Psalms and Hymns, I would advise only the last line of the last verse being so treated. A choirmaster must occasionally find that with certain members of his choir, rallentando seems to be almost part of their constitution, and when these begin to wag their heads to the tune, he may know that strict time is in jeopardy. Choirs need continual reminding to give notes their full value. How often we find with a tied note, or a series of tied notes at the end of a phrase, that before the last one is reached, all sound has died away. The last beat of a syncopated note is generally clipped short, and therefore upsets the balance of a phrase. Always stop boys rushing up to top notes. This is a very general habit, and throws out the swing of the piece. The two common faults of hurrying and dragging need hardly be mentioned, they are such familiar foes to every choirmaster. When boys sing out of time, one of the best remedies I know is to make them sing to numbers instead of words. For instance, the well-known hymn "Lead kindly Light" (nearly always sung out of time) can be set right by this method.



Accents.—I think I must take for granted that every one knows something about accents, the first and third beat in the bar of common time being strong and weak, etc. But I have often noticed that a time which choirs usually find difficult is $\frac{6}{8}$ with two accents in the bar. If you find the boys fail to take up the unaccented notes, usually the 3rd and 6th quavers in the bar, I should advise you to revert to making them sing to numbers instead of words. That well-known and much sung anthem, “As pants the hart,” by Spohr, generally presents this difficulty. You must never lose the two accents in the bar. The moment these become uncertain, the effect is untidy, and the parts will never go together with anything like swing or precision.

Rhythm.—Now as to rhythm. As there does not seem to be a general understanding of its precise meaning, I think I cannot do better than quote a short extract from Mr. Corder, whose admirable article on “Rhythm” in Grove’s Dictionary should be carefully read by every one. “Take a number of notes of equal length, and give an emphasis to every second, third, or fourth, the music will be said to be in “rhythm” of 2, 3, or 4, meaning in *time*. Now take a number of these groups or bars, and emphasize them in the same way as their subdivisions: the same term will be still employed and rightly so. Again, instead of notes of equal length, let each group consist of unequal notes, but similarly arranged, the form of these groups also is spoken of as the “prevailing rhythm,” though here “accent” is the only correct expression. Thus we see that the proper distinction of the three terms is as follows:—

ACCENT—arranges a heterogeneous mass of notes into long or short;

TIME—divides them into groups of equal duration;

RHYTHM—does for these groups what accent does for notes; In short, Rhythm is the metre of music.”

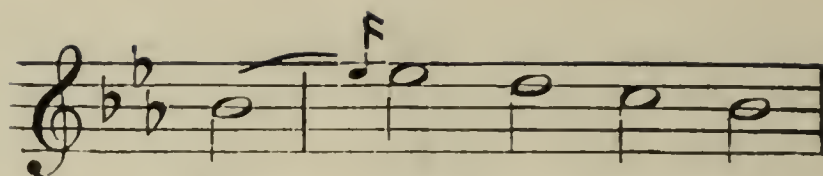
[Time, accent and rhythm, are so important and so closely related, that without attention to them, music can hardly be said to exist, and slipshod renderings are due to their neglect

more than to anything else. But where the choirmaster insists on strict attention being paid to them, the effect is not only at once perceptible, but the music receives an entirely new significance.

Attack.—This seems to me to be the subject that naturally follows. Strict time and attack are so interdependent that the one leads us inevitably to speak of the other. How refreshing it is to hear a good attack on a note or chord, and how seldom are we treated to that pleasure! Do not be thinking about the attack when you ought to be making it. This is one of the weakest points of a choir, and where it is concerned they ought to learn to be entirely independent of the help of the accompanying instrument. Breath should not be taken too late, otherwise a gasp ensues. When no rest is given in the music, and a breath is required, it should be taken at the expense of the last note of the previous phrase, never at the expense of the note which is coming. Mr. Randegger's instructions are as follows: "Hold back the breath for an instant, mentally aim at the pitch of the note before singing it, and then attack the sound gently, giving to the column of air the slight impulse necessary to the action of the vocal organs, for the production of a soft and pure quality of tone."

The taking up of a new chant, how ragged and undecided this generally is! A verse is sometimes gone before you can hear the tune. The fault here is not being prepared for the change *beforehand*. Every chorister should be prepared with the first note of the new chant in his mind, at the last verse sung to the previous chant. There should be no perceptible pause between the first chord on the organ, and its being taken up by the voices. They should always be on the alert before the chord is struck, and ready to take it up the moment it is heard. The only way to secure a good attack from a choir is never to pass over a bad one, and to practise the passage several times on this account alone. Clear and precise articulation of the initial consonant is a great help towards ensuring a good attack.

The worst attack is, as a rule, made in *piano* singing. I need hardly say that this is a fatal mistake. I think I have said before that *piano* singing from its very nature requires more definiteness than *forte* singing. You can and should be perfectly clear, without being loud. Another little obvious rule, constantly forgotten, is, do not open your mouth when the note should begin, but before! Anticipating the note, swooping, and portamento must not, of course, be tolerated for an instant in choral singing.



How sweet the name of

True legato is quite distinct from this, though, sad to say, often confounded with it by vocalists. Not only has good attack to be thought of here, but quitting sound on the stroke is as important.

Quitting Sound.—We incidentally touched on this when discussing the finishing of consonants in “pronunciation.” If this is adhered to, the quitting of sound will follow as a matter of course. Always make the different voices of your choir finish together, cleanly and promptly. Never allow for a moment an “end as you please” sort of finish!

Breaking of a Boy's Voice.—As I am speaking of men's voices and also on miscellaneous matters connected with a choirmaster's work in my next lecture, I thought that I would conclude this one with the subject of the breaking of a boy's voice. This close of a boy's singing career is one of the most disheartening facts that a choirmaster has to contend with. But do not let him pretend ignorance, or disregard the symptoms of the coming change. The general consensus of opinion is, that a boy should not sing at all at this time of muscular relaxation, though cases can of course be cited of good tenors and basses who have sung without intermission from the time they were boys. A boy's voice is generally at its very best and fullest just before it breaks; and one of the first signs of its breaking is a huskiness in the middle notes, and general unsteadiness of tone and intonation, the upper notes very often remaining full and powerful for some little time longer, but this is not by any means always the case. A choirmaster will very possibly think at this depressing moment that all the care and labour he has expended in teaching have been thrown away. This is natural and excusable; but he must not forget that the musical cultivation and taste which the boy is just beginning to show, are possessions for the rest of his life. Although his voice has left him for a time, his love of music and the good of it remain. What sort of voice, whether good or bad, he may possess as a man, all experts have failed to foretell, but it is happily not very common for a choir boy to be entirely devoid of voice later. Even if he does not shine as a solo vocalist, he will generally be able to join a choral society, or carry on his musical studies in part-singing. “All medical authorities seem to be agreed that rest is most desirable at the period of the break of the voice.

There is a congestion of the vocal organs at this time, and rest is considered most advisable." On this point Mr. Randegger observes, "When a youth is approaching manhood the voice undergoes a very great, and sometimes even a total change, for it is not infrequent that a boy having had a soprano voice, becomes in manhood a bass or baritone, while another who possessed a contralto voice is transformed into a tenor."

"It is most important to exercise great judgment and precaution in training children's voices for singing, never allowing them to strain their delicate vocal organs, and in every case suspending altogether the practice of singing during the critical time of change from childhood to adolescence." If he is a good, steady, reliable boy, try and make use of him in some capacity, so as to keep him connected with the church. It often happens that this "resting time" is very bad for the boy, and gives him time to get out of hand. No effort should be spared to keep in touch with him, as later on he may develop into a very valuable vocalist. In any case, for the boy's own sake, he should be looked after at this time. In conclusion, one word of warning is needed. The boy, when his voice is gone, considers himself beyond being treated as a boy, and as he is very sensitive on this point, let the choirmaster be careful to show him some of the little attentions which adults receive.



LECTURE III.

Balance of Voices—Ensemble—Blending—Treatment of Boy Altos—Men's Voices—Management of Rehearsals—Practical Hints for Small Choirs—Choice of Music—Conducting Services and Anthems—The Art of Teaching—Final Remarks.

Balance of Voices.—Having devoted my two previous Lectures almost exclusively to the training and management of choir boys, I must give what time remains to the discussion (amongst other things) of men's voices; and before taking them individually, I will begin by speaking of the balance of voices required in a well-proportioned choir.

For the purposes of argument we must assume, what will not often be the case, that all the voices are of average power, neither exceptionally good nor miserably poor. In this case I think the number of men's voices sometimes advocated is out of all reasonable proportion to the boys. Take for example the very usual choir of 24 boys. This will mean 12 each side. For these, 7 men a side—3 basses, 2 tenors, and 2 altos, if they have anything like good trained voices, should be enough to secure a proper balance of parts. Supposing your choir to be on a larger scale, with 30 boys, 15 on a side. Then I think 4 basses, 3 tenors, and 2 or 3 altos a side, are sufficient to counterbalance them. We must remember that in every choir there is always a tail of junior boys, whose power does not count for much, but whose time of value is coming. If these were up to the level of the leading boys, an extra man or two might be required. I have assumed, in coming to this conclusion, that all parts are equally well represented in their own way. But how constantly we find, particularly in voluntary choirs, that there is hardly a genuine bass voice among all the so-called basses. The majority are the ordinary baritone, who never possess that deep, full, bass quality which is such a fine foundation for good choral tone. Whether you can get this genuine article or not, always manage to secure an adequate bass part. It is not only the rock on which the other voices seem to rest, but it imparts to the whole body of sound a richness of tone that can be got in no other way. To a good supply of basses, unison passages owe most of their telling effect. Balance of voices is a subject on which no hard and fast rule can be laid down, because there are so many circumstances, differing in every case, to take into account. But it is

a matter that requires careful consideration, if my next point is to be brought out, viz : *Ensemble*.

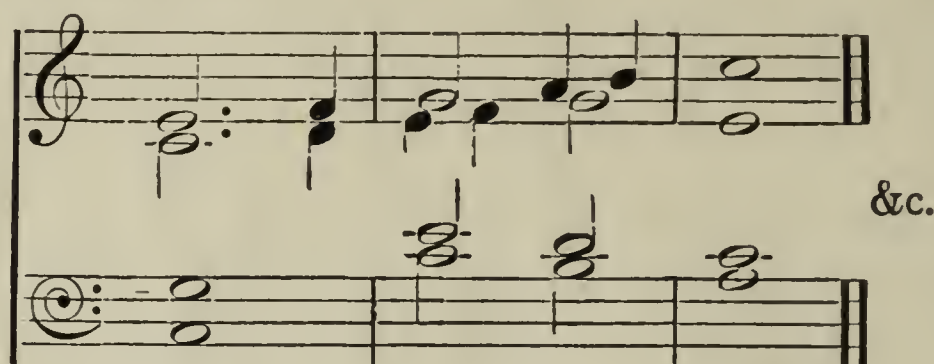
Ensemble.—A safe rule for all singers, whether men or boys, is : “never sing so loud that you cannot hear the voice next to you.” If you cannot hear him, you may be certain that you are too loud. Another thing of which almost every choral singer needs to be reminded is, to listen critically to the sound of his own voice, as compared with his neighbour’s, so as to be sure he is producing the right tone for blending with the rest. It is an art that wants practice, to listen to your own tone. On being asked : “did you hear the discordant noise you were making in such and such a passage?” the singer will in most cases innocently answer, “No,” showing that he was more intent on his own efforts, than on any idea of *ensemble*.

Henry Deacon neatly observes on this head, “A great difficulty in the way of study is to hear oneself as one really is ; and not as one intends to be. We are so much under the dominion of our minds, that it is very hard to avoid accepting our intentions for our performances.” This listening, and self-critical faculty can be very greatly cultivated.

Blending with Ladies’ Voices.—Voices that are produced haphazard, without any decided method, will never blend properly. This is an additional reason to the others already given, why I advocate for boys one definite head production. If they are trained on this method exclusively, you will find their voices, whether singing *piano* or *forte*, resemble one big voice ; and an additional advantage, not to be under-rated is, that they will blend with ladies’ voices indistinguishably, adding brilliancy without standing prominently out.

It is a well-known but curious fact, that many excellent voices which are quite satisfactory as soloists, never blend properly with others, but are always prominent in a choir, however *piano* they may try to sing. To the artistic ear, whose chief delight is a perfect *ensemble*, this will spoil what might otherwise be a real pleasure. It may arise from a radical peculiarity of *timbre*, on which no training is of any avail. But much oftener the cause is a bad production, which can and must be remedied, if the singer is to be a pleasant ingredient in the choir. One of the greatest satisfactions in vocal music is, to be, as it were, conscious only of the pure harmony of the chord, without being made aware of the individuality of any of the voices which compose it. Of course this is an ideal not often realized, but none the less one to be aimed at. It is a fact that will not commend itself to your conceited vocalist, but nevertheless one that should be maintained and urged, that all individuality in part-singing

must be suppressed. I have referred in Lecture 1 to the fact that all voices are weakest on the lower notes of their compass, and that this weakness is not confined to the trebles alone. In the second part of the well-known chant, Crotch in C (Cathedral Chant Book, No. 229)



you will find that the treble G, not being a very powerful note, will be overpowered, if the basses and tenors are allowed full vent on their upper C and E, which are very strong notes in their voices. These must be moderated to secure proper balance of tone, and to avoid what we have just objected to—undue prominence of any part. In the same way, the lowest notes of the tenor part will often need watching, if they are not to be obscured by the basses. Basses are, of course, the heaviest voice, and the alto part is generally the weakest. On this account they are rightly arranged in church as follows: altos nearest the congregation, then tenors, and then basses. In writing music for voices, I cannot but think that more regard might be paid to the strong and weak notes in the different voices. The *ensemble* would be helped in this way, and the chord made more effective.

Treatment of Men's Voices.—We now come to our next point, the treatment of men's voices. In speaking of the counter-tenor, who in a sense comes first, I must, at the risk of an Irish bull, beg leave to include the boy-alto. I am sure you will be glad to hear what Mr. John Hullah has to say on the subject of the counter-tenor: "The falsetto counter-tenor, or more properly counter-alto, still to be found in cathedral choirs, dates, if musical history is to be read in music, from the Restoration of Charles II., who doubtless desired to reproduce at home, approximately at least, a class of voice he had been accustomed to in continental chapels, royal and ducal." I think it will interest you also as church musicians, to hear Mr. Rockstro's account of, and comments upon, the boy-alto and counter-tenor. "In Germany, at the beginning of the 17th century, boys were taught, as now, to sing both soprano and contralto parts with equal success. In England a different plan was

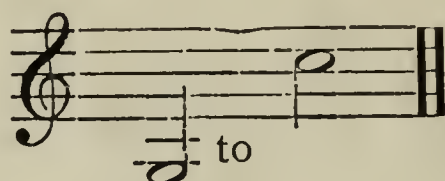
adopted. After the Great Rebellion, the difficulty of obtaining choir boys was so great, that treble parts were either summarily dispensed with, or played as a 'pis aller' upon cornets. Adult voices were, however, more easily obtainable, and adult singers learnt to execute alto, and even low treble parts, in falsetto. Thus arose the cultivation of the peculiar form of voice now called the counter-tenor; an unnatural register, which still holds its ground in English cathedrals, with a pertinacity which leads to the lamentable neglect, if not the absolute exclusion, of one of the most beautiful voices in existence—the true boy-alto. This sweeping change in the constitution of our cathedral choirs naturally led to a change of corresponding magnitude in the character of the music written for them. In the verse anthems of Humphrey, Wise, Blow, Purcell, and other masters of the school of the Restoration, the falsetto part, under its title of counter-tenor, holds a very important position indeed; and still more important is the rôle accorded to it by Croft and other writers of a later generation. . . In Germany the falsetto voice has always been held in very low estimation indeed. Spohr, on his first visit to this country, expressed the greatest dislike to our English counter-tenors."

Boy-Alto.—I do not suppose there will be many here who will agree in general with Mr. Rockstro in his admiration of the boy-alto. There have certainly been instances, though very few and far between, of boys possessing really beautiful contralto voices; but, as a rule, the boy-alto, as found in the ordinary church, is nothing special. He will be either a treble on the point of breaking, who has lost his top notes, or one who has never been distinguished for a good treble compass. Of this material, because it is no use in the treble, the alto part is commonly made up. In any case, whether he has a good voice or not, the boy-alto will be obliged to use his chest register, certainly for the lower notes, of his part. If he does this, we generally observe a certain coarseness, and as we have seen before, the chest register of boys is not the best for mixing with other voices.

Counter-Tenor v. Boy-Alto.—The vexed question of man v. boy-alto is one that in small places, or remote districts, generally settles itself by the impossibility of getting the counter-tenor. Where counter-tenors, even if only moderately good, can be had, I do not fancy that many choirmasters will prefer boy-altos. In the first place, it is difficult, unless they happen to be good readers, to teach average boys an alto part. In the second place, a greater number of them will be required; that is, at the very least, half the number of the trebles, and unless

boys are plentiful in the district, this will, of course, rob the treble part. Thirdly, few choirmasters will have the time at their disposal necessary for the extra teaching involved. When counter-tenors are unattainable, the boy-alto will be our only chance, and with careful training he can be made a tolerable success.

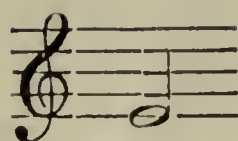
Compass.—The compass of the counter-tenor is from G to C,



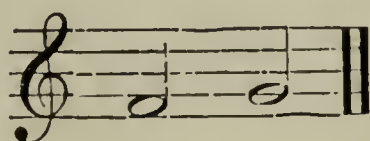
but the boy-alto, if he be trained as I shall now suggest, will be able without difficulty, to give us a good note on this C, as well as good notes above it. This extra compass is of the utmost service in most modern music, notably choruses from Mendelssohn's Oratorios and Brahms' works. But it must be remembered that the counter-tenor will be the more effective of the two in old English Cathedral music, which was specially written for this voice. I strongly urge that the chest register of the boy-alto should never be taken above E,



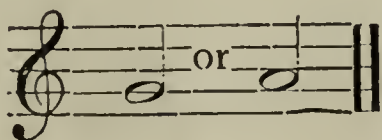
and that the training of his voice should proceed exactly on the lines indicated in Lecture 1, for the treble. That is to say: scales downwards with good forward tone in the head voice, until he arrives at this E. Here he will make his break, and begin his chest register. But this note must be so softened that it will be almost impossible to tell where he passes from one register to the other. This difficulty of the break cannot in the case of the boy-alto be evaded. With this voice I think the break is inevitable, but in my opinion, his chest voice is nearly always taken too high, and owing generally to fewness of number, boy-altos are often allowed to force out a coarse quality of tone in the chest register. This is one of the principal reasons why this voice is so often described as "braying." If you want it to blend with the other voices, and to give a pure quality of tone, it seems to me there is but one way to secure these ends. To increase the number of your boy-altos, not only for proper balance, but so that you may modify to a great extent their chest register, from E



downwards, and thus prevent a raucous sound, insisting that this note be the limit of the chest voice. The head voice would be used above this E, and of course the F and G



next to it must and *can* be developed to bridge over the break. Should you train your trebles on Method 2, *i.e.* with the break at G or A,

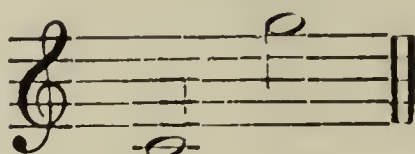


it will be better to make your boy-altos change their register on the same note, but I infinitely prefer the break being kept as low down in the compass as possible, as recommended by Lennox Browne and Behnke (see Lecture 1).

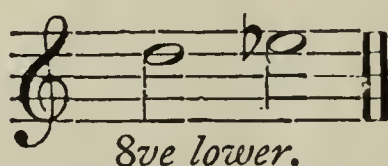
In spite of what I have here said in favour of boy-altos, my advice is : if you can get counter-tenors, do so. You will want fewer of them than boy-altos, and they impart brightness of a peculiarly sweet *timbre* to the harmony. We all know that the counter-tenor has his faults, sometimes bordering on the ridiculous, such as hooting and squalling ; but if he possess anything like an agreeable tone, he is far to be preferred to the boy-alto for church music.

Men's Voices. Private Class.—The vocal training of the adult members of a choir is nearly always neglected. It is of course a matter of some difficulty to secure this training, but I cannot help thinking that enthusiastic choirmen, especially volunteers, would not object to paying a small fee and forming a class to improve their knowledge of music in general, and in particular, to learn to produce their voices better and to read at sight. In better qualifying them for their work, this would relieve the choirmaster, and lighten his labours immensely at rehearsal. In this way only, can the "Throaty Tenor" and the "Bawling Bass" be effectually dealt with, apart from private tuition, which they cannot always afford. They would be very soon taught by this means not to force their upper notes in church and spoil the effect of the music.

Tenor Voice.—The usual compass of a tenor voice is from C to G,

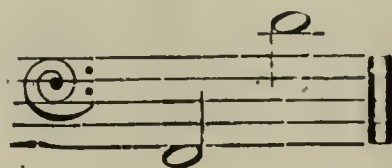


The average tenor on his upper E or F considers himself in all his glory, and spares neither his voice nor other people's ears, and drowns almost any other sound that should be heard at the same time. If these notes were properly produced, as might be studied in the suggested class, tone and perhaps tune would be much improved. Flat singing is a vice to which this voice is very prone, and a flat tenor is well known to drag the whole choir down with him. This is usually attributed to the boys, but it is by no means just to accuse them alone. Adults are quite as often sinners in this respect. D or E ♭

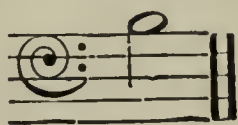


will be quite high enough to sing with what is known as the "open tone." The tenor should be taught to use his "closed tone" on E and above, and the best practice to secure this is the same that I recommended for the boy, "oo-oh-ah," keeping of course the position of the "ah" quite forward. Throaty tenors are unfortunately very common, and should the choir-master be lucky enough to form the class of which I have spoken, he will find this failing most difficult to get rid of, especially if the habit is of long standing. It will require all his tact, as well as all his knowledge of voice production. His first step will be to make sure that the larynx is kept low. If it is allowed to rise high in the throat, it is certain to cause that throaty tone which we want to cure. Again, you may be sure that when a tenor throws his chin forward, he is doing no good either to his own voice or to the choral harmony. If tenors are not really such, but in truth light baritones (and this is often so), they naturally find the high notes difficult to reach. In this case it is even better to use the falsetto voice, then to get red in the face straining after notes which cannot be reached or produced with ease.

Bass Voice.—The usual compass of the bass voice is from F to D.



The bass voice is naturally of a hard quality, not very flexible, but powerful and capable of sustaining sounds. Its hardness and want of flexibility are caused by the thick muscular structure of the organ, and therefore in its cultivation great care must be taken to produce the sounds lightly and easily, at the same time preserving the roundness. The same remarks about the "open" and "closed tone" in the tenor voice apply to the bass. He should begin to "close" about B,



and get the tone forward on this note and those above it. For this purpose the vowel E as in "me" will be found useful in practice. An open C has sometimes a good effect, but he ought to make a habit of singing it with the closed tone, as he will more often be required to do so. Singing these upper notes on "oh" will very often secure this end. A goodround, deep, bass voice in a choir is worth anything, even if you can only get *one*. It gives a rich effect which cannot be produced in any other way. The benefit of good bass quality will be felt throughout the service, imparting fulness to the tone from the simplest Amen to the big bold unison passage in the Anthem.

Solos.—Before leaving men's voices, a word or two here might be advisable on the subject of solos. The choirmaster will have a good deal to put up with in this particular. It has been known that a choirman, after singing a popular song at a Penny Reading, will get an encore from his friends! Elated at his success, he comes to the choirmaster with rather a bolder front, and says, "Why don't you put me down to sing 'Comfort ye' and 'Every valley?'" The moment it is suggested that this is a little beyond his powers, he thinks it is time to leave the choir! Solos must often be sung by men with small experience, who moreover have not made much study of their art. There are many choirmen, even professional, who are not artistically minded, and it is a difficult matter to make them enjoy doing a simple composition perfectly. If they could only feel the pleasure of doing an easy thing, and doing it well, they would then understand how bad the effect is of attempting music beyond their capabilities. The consideration should be—*Can* the choir do this? not—How good it will be for them to try it! No congregation can be expected to listen with interest and attention to music badly sung; nor can indifferently performed music, in spite of the best intentions, be considered an aid to devotion. One of the essentials of a good service is

thoroughness of detail. One often hears inferior finish in the minor points of the service, and perhaps an anthem—whereas perfect finish and no anthem at all would be much better.

Tremolo.—Another defect which the choirmaster will often have to combat, is the introduction on every note of a paralysis of tone, known as the “tremolo.” On this subject let us now see what Mr. Henry Deacon says: He tells us how a “vocal vice sprang into existence, namely, a departure from the steadily-sustained note. It took two forms, the vibrato and the tremolo. . . Both are legitimate means of expression in dramatic music, when used sparingly in the proper time and place, but when constantly heard, are intolerable. They—the tremolo especially—cause at first a painful sensation, by suggesting a state of nervous excitement which must rapidly prove fatal, but this soon subsides, and they are felt to be mere abominable mannerisms, expressing nothing at all, but a direful want of control over the feelings. And there is no greater nuisance in life than cheap tears. . . . The tremolo is sometimes used with the view of making the voice carry, but if it does this, it does it at the expense of intonation. With others it is simply an exaggeration, supposed to be “intense.” It is happily beginning to disappear, thanks to the few who have resisted the fascination of easy popularity, and preserved the traditions of the good school, amongst whom our own best concert and oratorio singers have done their full share of good work.” These words, from one of the finest voice-trainers ever known in England, will need no addition of mine. It will require a good deal of tact and management if the choirmaster is to get rid of this “vocal vice” in a singer, who probably prides himself on its good effect.

In this matter of improving, we will not say training, his choirmen, our choirmaster will find it an immense advantage if he can illustrate his teaching by his own voice. His salary is not likely to admit of expensive singing lessons. He must avoid, at all costs, unqualified teachers of singing, as there is much quackery about on this subject. He will learn a good deal more from a well written treatise. If he is unable to afford proper lessons, his best plan will be to attend a good cathedral service whenever possible, and hear the thing as it ought to be done. When insisting on sweetness and purity of tone, our choirmaster will greatly strengthen his position if he can demonstrate how to attain them. Do not imagine from this that he is always expected to have a fine voice. This is a gift only bestowed upon the few. Let me here say that at any examination to which he may submit himself, he can never be called upon to do more than show an understanding of good voice

production and vocal methods ; and this he can do with the smallest amount of voice. Take, for example, our best teachers of singing. Many of them have no voices to speak of, and yet they can give all that is necessary as illustrations to their pupils.

Management of Rehearsals.—I must now speak of the management of rehearsals, in which better method might often save time, temper, patience, and fatigue. Before dealing with musical matters, let us imagine the delightful possibility of a choirmaster having a choir practice room, and being able to arrange the details of it for his own convenience. In it he should certainly have a small grand or upright pianoforte (pianette), over which he can keep an eye on his choristers while he is seated playing. Ranged round his piano should be benches, with fixed music desks in front of them, enough to accommodate all the boys without crowding. The walls of the room should be lined with cupboards, some fitted with music shelves, some with hooks for cassocks and surplices. Corresponding with his place in the choir, should be the hook allotted to each chorister, and in front of it should he stand when robed for service, ready for the signal to start in procession. This start may then be made without any shuffling, pushing or whispering, the whole choir in the exact order in which they are to sit in church. I am well aware that in many churches it would be impossible to arrange this, but where practicable, even in a modified degree, it will be found useful and helpful. In most newly-built churches one is happy to find much larger rooms for vestries and for choir use.

Care of Music.—The music should be carefully numbered and catalogued, and the catalogue placed in the hands of the choir librarian, specially chosen for his tidy habits. Sheet music will be all the better if strongly cased in brown paper. The trifling expense involved will be found an economy in the long run. The choirmaster should certainly superintend the librarian at first, and show him that details of neatness and order are not beneath his notice.

Payment.—When the payment of the choir is in the hands of the choirmaster, he must remember that weekly payment in a poor church will often be the means of ensuring regularity. The members will often make a point of attending when they know they are going to get a shilling, or whatever it may be, which is sometimes very important to them.

Fines.—If a system of fines is imposed, it is a good plan to use these to add at the end of the quarter to the salaries of the

best boys, *i.e.* those who have obtained the highest number of marks.

Sitting down.—Allow boys to sit frequently at rehearsals. They get very tired with too much standing, and consequently inattentive. Show consideration for the physical side of the chorister, if only because it affects his voice very directly. Long services are trying for adults, and therefore more so for boys. In some churches an excellent plan is adopted of letting the boys go out of church before the sermon, at the last verse of the previous hymn. The only drawback to this is that they will probably go whooping down the street, without a thought for the feelings of the preacher who is giving out his text!

Hints.—In trying new music, it will be found a good plan to take it at a slower pace than marked, without any regard to expression, *rallentando*, etc., to begin with; when the tempo is increased, let it never be so much that clearness suffers.

Always put bad singers between two good ones. They will have a better chance of falling into the right way. Never allow boys to cover their faces with their copies. Two boys looking over the same copy is often a good plan, as one helps the other. But there are many experienced men who recommend each boy having his own, as a means of making him self-reliant.

It is a good thing to let some, if not all the boys, learn the solo, or verse part, and call upon any one of them unexpectedly to sing it. This gives them ideas of solo work, and keeps them keen and alert.

If the boys' practice begins, as it should, with scales and exercises, a clever choirmaster will coin some of these from difficult passages in the music which he has in hand. In doing this he will kill two birds with one stone, *i.e.* tune up their voices, and get the music learnt.

Always begin by practising the most uninteresting items first, when the choir is fresh and keen. Any difficult music should on this account be taken first, and not left to the end, when voices are tired and keenness is on the wane. It is bad policy to grind at one thing so long that the choir gets stale. It is almost impossible to sing anything well, when you have ceased to enjoy it. It is essential, if the full rehearsal is to be interesting, quickly got through, and effective, that the boys should be prepared and ready with their work before the men arrive. It is irritating for men whose time may be precious, to have to sit and wait while boys are being coached. Always make a choir sing softly at rehearsal, except for final effects. It saves the voices, is excellent practice in control, and you need not fear

their not singing loud enough at the service as a rule. Good *piano* singing is not a very common accomplishment.

A choirmaster ought to have a detailed plan of work for the practice, made out (at least in his own mind), and know, not only in what order he wishes the music taken, but the effects he desires to get in its rendering. We ought never to hear : “ Now let me see, what shall we try next ? ” or “ Gentlemen do you feel quite happy in that lead, or shall we take it again ? ” Do not go back through the whole of a composition to correct a single mistake. Explain what is wrong and where, before trying even a part of it again, and be very explicit and distinct as to the bar and page where you want the start made, so that no one can have the excuse of not having found his place, for making a bad attack. Do not admit of long pauses. Go straight from one thing to another without unnecessary waste of time. Business should be business at a rehearsal. If you want the respect of the adult members of your choir, you will adopt this maxim, and keep conversation and gossip till your work is finished. The choirmaster should often go to the bottom of the church during rehearsal to hear the effect of his labours. He will be astonished at the difference which a little distance makes.

Choral singing, to have any telling effect, must be crisp and never slovenly. I think brightness is essential, not only in church music, but in the man who teaches it. For the choirmaster who is anxious that everything should go well, there are many irritating moments. It is easy to preach, but it is more difficult to practise, and if anyone wants to put his temper to a test, let him try choir-training for a few weeks. He must of course be resolute in not showing his annoyance, even when he knows it is thoroughly justified. And in this connection let me say : never use indiscreet reprimands of the men before the boys. This will always be resented, and a word privately has ten times the effect. On the other hand, do not talk *at* the men, through the boys. It is a pity in every way to resort to this mean expedient, for sometimes the men do not even take the hint, and the correction is thrown away. There will be many directions which you will have to give from time to time, to the men as well as to the boys, and to see that they are carried out. One is—to insist on their finding their places in the books beforehand at a service, and not waiting till they miss the all-important point of starting. To see some slow old man, still fumbling with leaves in the middle of the first verse of a psalm or hymn, is disheartening, as he is not likely to shine in the attack ! The ecstatic soul, who loses himself so completely in the music that he is generally a beat behind, will want a good dose of plain English, and this is hard to administer to one who

is earnest in his work. This earnestness is not too common.

Reverence.—We live in an age when reverence is at a discount. A reminder on this head occasionally is not at all superfluous ; and slovenliness and lolling are by no means confined to the boys' choir-stalls. Should any blunder occur in the service, do not get into a fuss, and fume, and frown. Keep a cool head. The musical intelligence of the mass of the people is not of a high calibre, and more often than not, if you do not advertise the fact that something has happened, it will pass unnoticed.

Congregational Singing.—Congregations must have opportunities of singing during the service, if only to prevent their joining in an octave lower in the anthem ! This is sometimes done, even in the solos, and in this connection, let the choirmaster thoroughly realize that the congregation will always be behind, whatever pace the choir may sing.

Accompaniment.—A pianoforte is the best instrument for use at rehearsals. The harmonium should be avoided. There is a danger lest your boys should unconsciously imitate the tone of it, but it will do no great harm if you only use it to start, or help the music along with an occasional chord, and do not keep up a buzzing accompaniment throughout. Conduct a good deal of the practice unaccompanied. It will conduce to self reliance, and save the choir from that slavish dependence on the organ at the service, which is such a dangerous habit. Should anything at any time go wrong with the accompaniment, the choir should never be at a loss, or show, as they generally do, signs of falling to pieces.

At this point I could say a good deal on the accompaniment of the service, but these Lectures are on the subject of "Choir-training" alone, so I must keep myself within these limits.

Choice of Music.—The choirmaster has not always a free hand in respect of the choice of music. He will have a good many opinions to contend with, from the musical, and otherwise. He will require all his tact to convince the old lady who subscribes £5 to the choir fund that she is not always right, without offending her. It is a curious fact that in music alone of all the arts, people, however ignorant, think they are entitled to pronounce judgment. Futile arguments, such as : "my dear father had a beautiful voice" are adduced in support of this. These little traits of human nature require delicate handling.

It seems to me a great pity that from the grand old store of English cathedral music, unsurpassed in any other country,

there should not be a percentage, at any rate, sung and made familiar in all our churches. These appear to be almost entirely ignored in the parish church, and the sentimental and sugary compositions of quite another school seem to have taken their place. I am well aware that there are uninteresting anthems and services in the "good old English school," as in every other school of music; but you are under no obligation to choose these, but can make your selection from those which are really good. If you want music of the modern school, in a word, you cannot do better than keep to Wesley and his followers. "Wesley inaugurated what may be called the modern phase of English church music." He supplied a connecting link between the old and the new. There is a great tendency with those who are thoroughly imbued with ultra modernism, to smile at Church composers, and especially at those of the Madrigal period. It is chiefly because they have never studied their works, and are perhaps not satisfied unless they see music marked "appassionata," or unless it contains many startling effects in modulation. I should like to suggest that there is another branch of music, whose existence does not depend upon these things, but on the broad, pure, diatonic harmonies which give a grand and noble effect to be got in no other way. Disciples of Wagner will do well to remember how *he* recognized this. You have only to turn to the opening church scene in the "Meistersinger," to learn how the master mind can use all schools of writing for his special purpose. Notice the magnificent contrast of the broad ecclesiastical harmonies of the chorale standing out against the fragments of the "Preislied" introduced as interludes!

Florid Music.—Some churches indulge in very florid music. Some of it certainly seems to me to be out of place, and unfitted for church service. The words are apparently relegated to a second place, the ornamental accompaniments standing out as the principal feature. This kind of music almost makes one think sometimes whether another Palestrina and another Council of Trent are not necessary!

There are so many varying conditions to be considered in a choirmaster's work, that it would be only wasting my time and yours, to enter into minute details. Every man must fill up the above outline himself, as his own case requires.

After all my recommendations and criticisms, now let me turn to the pleasanter task of giving praise where praise is due. The choirmaster who works, as many do, producing a really good rendering of a service with inadequate material, and very often keeps a choir together by his own character and pleasant influence, certainly deserves a gold medal. The tact, ability,

and judgment that are sometimes expected of a choirmaster, are such as would do credit to a Prime Minister, *and all this very often for £30 a year!* If the difficulty of the work were more fully understood by the mass of the people and by those in authority, choirmasters would be more leniently judged. Not only does the choirmaster need encouragement, but the choir also, whether paid or unpaid. An outing occasionally, or some social gathering made pleasant, are very helpful in healing sores and cementing friendships.

Conducting.—A choirmaster nowadays will often be called upon to conduct, not only rehearsals, as we have seen, but public performances of Festival services or Oratorios. As this is now a recognized part of his profession, I feel I ought to say something on this head. Mr. Rockstro writes: "It may seem strange to claim, for the mechanical process of beating time, the rank of an element, and a very important element, necessary to the attainment of ideal perfection in Art: yet Mendelssohn's method of managing the bâton proved to be one." Here let me say that I think his "management of the bâton" was by no means all that made Mendelssohn so fine a conductor. Besides his musical genius, it was his concentration, his lack of self-consciousness, and giving over of himself, body and soul, to the work in hand, which made his power over his band so magnetic. This magnetism is given only to the few, but the conductor's best substitute for it, will be to make himself one in spirit and sympathy with the forces under his command. To the novice in conducting, the precaution of waiting and looking to see whether the choir and organist are ready, is a very necessary one, as it is the only means of ensuring a simultaneous attack.

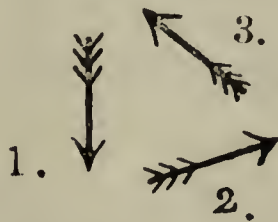
Conducting in a church must be very quiet and unobtrusive, just enough to keep the choir together. Any acrobatic display is very much out of place. You may have heard the amusing advice: "if you want to be a popular conductor, take lessons in swimming and carpet beating." This throwing of body and arms about spoils the solemnity of our worship, and does no good to the music. The back view of a man arrayed in a surplice indulging in these antics, is worse than absurd.

You will I am sure be glad to hear what no less an authority than the famous Berlioz has to say on this subject. "It is of importance that the conductor in delivering his different directions, should not move his arm much; and consequently not allow his stick to pass over much space; for each of these gestures should operate nearly instantaneously: or at least take but so slight a movement as to be imperceptible. If the move-

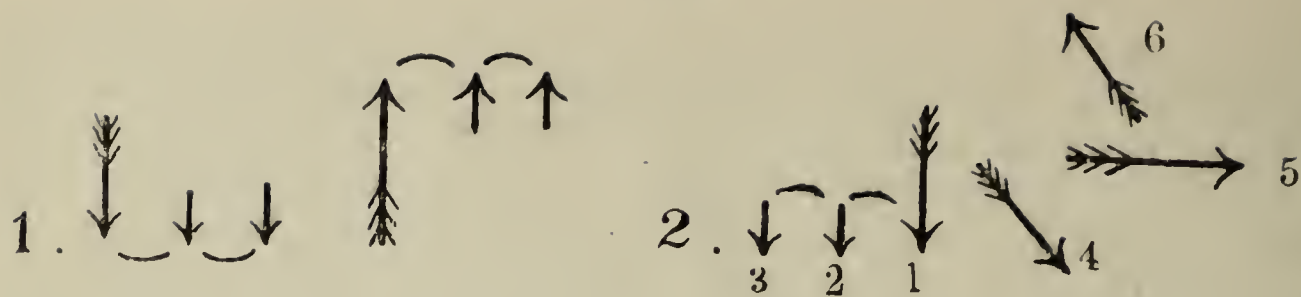
ment becomes perceptible on the contrary, and multiplied by the number of times that the gesture is repeated, it ends by throwing the conductor behind in the time he is beating, and by giving to his conducting a tardiness that proves injurious. This defect moreover, has the result of needlessly fatiguing the conductor, and of producing exaggerated evolutions verging on the ridiculous, which attract the spectator's attention, and become very disagreeable to witness As to the employment of noises of any kind whatever, produced by the stick of the conductor upon his desk, or by his foot upon the platform, they call for no other then unreserved reprehension. It is worse than a bad method, it is a barbarism."

Choirs should be taught to look for the chief accents from their conductor. These should be enough to keep the voices together. It is not often that you will need to use the whole of your arm in conducting. A loose wrist is the right thing, and all that is necessary, as a rule, for the guidance of a small body of singers. One of the essentials of a good conductor is to know what he wants, and see that he gets it. Definiteness of beat, however small, is the thing to aim at; describing vague semi-circles in the air is not likely to create precision in your ranks. It is not an easy matter to get beginners to adopt this decision of beat. The choir must understand, and be in sympathy with, the little ways of their conductor, that is to say, know what he wants by a sign from his bâton, or a look from his eye. Sir George Grove remarks: "In a perfect conductor mechanical excellence must be accompanied by knowledge, feeling, appreciation, and the highest qualities of a musician; but these last will be of little avail without the former, or without the familiar relation between the conductor and the band, which long knowledge, or at any rate several rehearsals alone can give." Of course this is absolutely true, but an ideal seldom reached.

Now as to the different kinds of time which you will have to indicate by your beat. I take for granted that it will be hardly necessary for me to show how 2 or even 4 in bar should be done; but I think $\frac{3}{4}$ is better beaten with the second beat outwards, *i. e.* to the right. This will make it more visible:—

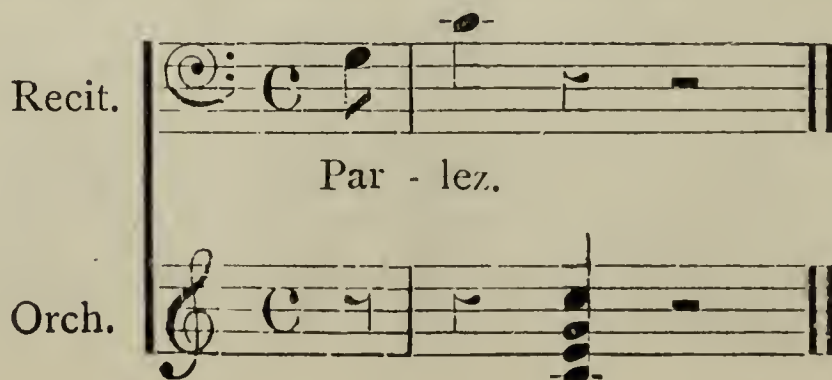


Now as regards $\frac{6}{8}$ time. If the movement is quick, 2 beats in a bar are all that is required, but if in slow time, it may be necessary to indicate the unaccented beats as well. There are two ways of doing this:—



Such times as $\frac{9}{8}$ or $\frac{9}{16}$ are three accents in the bar, and practically the same as $\frac{3}{4}$ and $\frac{3}{8}$. For the guidance of those who may not have had the advantage of hearing a work performed, before they are called upon to conduct it themselves, I quote the following advice of Berlioz on the question of pace. "The conductor is above all bound to possess a clear idea of the principal points and character of the work of which he is about to superintend the performance, or study, in order that he may, without hesitation or mistake, at once determine the time of each movement desired by the composer. If he have not had the opportunity of receiving his instructions directly from the composer, or if the time have not been transmitted to him by tradition, he must have recourse to the indications of the metronome, and study them well; the majority of composers nowadays taking the precaution to write them at the head, and in the course of their pieces. I do not mean to say by this, that it is necessary to imitate the mathematical regularity of a metronome; all music so performed would become of freezing stiffness, and I even doubt whether it would be possible to observe so flat an uniformity during a certain number of bars. But the metronome is none the less excellent to consult, in order to know the original time, and its chief alterations."

Recitative.—A very difficult thing to conduct with success in choral music, is recitative, and as we shall see from Berlioz, whose words come with more authority than I could ever claim, the beating is seldom done on right lines. If the conductor follows Berlioz' instructions, I think he may save many a misunderstanding with his forces. "Many conductors have the habit when directing the orchestra in recitatives, of paying no heed to the written divisions of the bar, and of marking an up-beat before that whereon a brief orchestral chord occurs, even when this chord comes upon an accented part of the bar."



In a passage such as this, they raise the arm at the rest which commences the bar, and lower it at the time of the chord. I cannot approve of such a method, which nothing justifies, and which may frequently occasion accidents in the execution. Neither do I see why, in recitatives, the bar should not be divided regularly, and the real beats be marked in their place, as in music beaten in time. I therefore advise, for the preceding example, that the first beat should be made down as usual, and the stick carried to the left, for striking the chord upon the second beat, and so on for analogous cases, always dividing the bar regularly."

This certainly seems to me to be sound advice. If it were adopted we should have fewer false entries, and be spared that tiresome tapping with the bâton on the music book just before the chord is to be played.

For a pause, I think it is better to hold the bâton quite still, and then give the choir an indication when you wish them to cease singing by a slight movement of the stick. The left hand is useful occasionally to indicate that you wish a passage softened down, and a quiet and unobtrusive sign can easily be made with it.

The Art of Teaching.—Before bringing this my last lecture to a close, I feel I ought to say a word or two on the art of teaching. The gift of imparting knowledge is a great and rare one, but it can be studied, and with benefit to all concerned. I think I have already pointed out that to be a good teacher you must have method. This means in general terms, the systematic arrangement and organization of your means, to secure the special end in view. Every choirmaster must decide for himself in the matter of arranging his work with the choir, but if his ways are mere "rule of thumb," he must not expect such satisfactory results as if he worked by method. He should study how to get the greatest amount of good and intelligent work out of his choir, with the minimum of effort on their part. It is all-important, if he hopes to keep the intelligent attention of say 30 people, that he should give some thought and study to this subject beforehand. There are four very strong reasons why a choirmaster should understand something of the art of teaching. They are:—

1. He has to teach music.
2. He has frequently inadequate means at his disposal in the shape of voices.
3. He has very limited time to devote to their training.
4. He is always expected to produce the best results.

To be a successful teacher he must know how to analyse a passage of complex difficulty into single difficulties, and practise these separately.

Concluding Remarks.—Much more, in many interesting directions, could be said on this important subject, but I hope these few hints may start you all thinking for yourselves. My time is up, and I conclude with the earnest hope that the young choirmaster will have found some suggestions in these Lectures, which will be an encouragement, as well as a help to him in his work. I have been very definite, at the same time very careful to look all round the various questions touched upon ; and I have tried to keep my mind free from any bias or prejudice. I am quite aware that I shall not please everybody in the method I recommend for the training of a boy's voice (Lecture 1). Judging by results, I firmly believe I am right, and these results are, amongst other good things : disappearance of all harshness, saving of fatigue, pure and sympathetic tone, perfect intonation.

We have only to look back a few years to see the enormous strides made in our church music, and the credit of this is due almost entirely to the zeal and hard work of our choirmasters. Sir Frederick Ouseley remarks : "Choral services may now be heard in many a village church, where formerly only a few bad voices roared and howled to the accompaniment of a barrel-organ, or to that of a few rural fiddlers in a gallery. It is impossible to over-rate the importance of this onward step, from every point of view, and it is a pleasant feature to contemplate in the general aspect of musical culture and development in England."

With our Royal College of Organists more to the fore than ever ; with the Royal Academy of Music, and the Royal College of Music with their Choir-training Classes ; and with the keen interest of Churchmen in this subject, may we not confidently hope that the rendering of our Church music will still progress onwards and upwards ?

(The Illustrations to these Lectures were excellently rendered by boys from the "London College for Choristers.")



The Royal College of Organists.

ALL SORTS AND CONDITIONS OF ORGANISTS,

A LECTURE DELIVERED AT MANCHESTER,

ON APRIL 18TH, 1903.

BY

C. W. PEARCE, Mus.D., F.R.C.O.



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ALL SORTS AND CONDITIONS OF ORGANISTS,

*A Lecture delivered before the Northern Members of
The Royal College of Organists,*

By CHARLES W. PEARCE, Mus.D. Cantab., F.R.C.O.

On April 18th, 1903.

Whilst fully appreciating the honour of being asked to deliver the Annual Address to the northern members of The Royal College of Organists, I also realize the difficulty of selecting a subject which has not already been dealt with in a far more perfect manner than I could hope to treat it. But on looking over some of the titles of papers read to you by my predecessors, I observe that although technical matters are fairly well represented in that long and honourable list, other subjects of almost equal interest and importance seem to be omitted. What may be termed *current professional topics* may perhaps be classed amongst some of the themes yet to be discussed at these important meetings of yours. And so, in looking out over the wide and sometimes tempest-tossed expanse of everyday thought and opinion, I not unnaturally seize upon a topic which appears as it were to be floating on the surface just now, and is consequently attracting even more than its usual share of public attention.

The ideas and suggestions contained in that cleverly thought-out paper on "The Profession and Position of the Modern Organist," will be still uppermost in the minds of any of you who had the privilege of hearing Dr. A. Madeley Richardson read it at the recent I.S.M. Conference at Dublin. Whatever else it may have done, that excellent paper has had the effect of setting the ball rolling in the direction of a fuller and wider consideration of the duties, privileges, trials and responsibilities of

the modern organist ; but, for obvious reasons, it has exerted a rather *sideways* impulse to the forward motion, inasmuch as it practically ignored all organists who are outside the limits of that somewhat vague definition "the profession," as well as all who do not hold cathedral, collegiate, or well-paid parochial posts under the auspices of the Church of England. It is evident, therefore, that Dr. Richardson's paper—able as it undoubtedly was—did *not* cover anything like the wide field of artistic work and influence which is so concisely summed up in that one word which appeals so magnetically to the sympathies of all of us—the magic word "organist."

Consequently, in addressing you to-day as a member of the Council of that great College which has done so much for us, and is destined to do even more in the future, I feel myself free to take advantage of the ground already covered so well by Dr. Richardson in his paper, and to dismiss at once—with perhaps a mere reference now and then—all considerations which *exclusively* appertain to the work of Church of England Organists as a class by themselves, and to speak to you on some of the difficult questions which now and then perplex and trouble "all sorts and conditions of organists"—regardless of the special character (religious or otherwise) of the various appointments they hold, or desire to hold. We cannot expect to *settle* any one of these questions all at once ; they are of too general a character, and are too far reaching in their issues to be thus summarily disposed of. But one feels strongly that in bringing them under the consideration of such an influential gathering as this, they appeal to the sympathies of organists with far greater force and reality than they can ever hope for at the hands of casual and anonymous writers in the correspondence columns of our musical newspapers and periodicals. And if such questions do not admit of immediate solution, we may perhaps discover, that after a fair and careful examination of what is capable of being said on both sides, a great deal of apparent uncertainty and superficial difficulty may disappear. I propose to speak first of the difficulty of obtaining an organist's appointment ; secondly, of the uncertainty of its tenure when it has been obtained ; thirdly, of its remuneration ; and fourthly, of the relation between the organist, and those under, and with whom he is called upon to work.

I. HOW TO OBTAIN AN ORGANIST'S APPOINTMENT :—Many of us who have held posts for the last 20 or 30 years with very few changes of work during that time, can scarcely realize the difficulty which is now experienced by some of our younger brethren in getting their *first* berth, however small

and insignificant such a first appointment may appear to us. The chief difficulty lies in the fact that—in the Church of England at least—the clergy and other church authorities are extremely reluctant to engage as organist any person who is not already thoroughly conversant with the musical requirements of the Prayer Book, no matter how accomplished the same person may be as a *mere player*. A great deal may be said in support of this clerical reluctance, for it is astonishing how little is known of the details of the ordinary Church Service by even competent musicians who have never learned these things as choir-boys. Quite recently, a brother organist told me that upon one occasion when he was obliged to be absent from his well-known London Church in the middle of the week, he had to fall back upon the help of a very capable organ student (not a pupil of his own), as his deputy for a simple service upon the morning of a Saint's day. A part of the duty consisted of accompanying the responses to the Commandments which were sung to one of the settings in Mercer's book. But the deputy, who, although a brilliant player with no end of voluntaries and recital pieces in his portfolio had never accompanied such a service before ; and utterly innocent of what was expected of him, after playing the response to the *first* Commandment, calmly rested (as Mercer's book seemed to direct him) until the tenth Commandment, for which special music was provided. What became of the responses to the intervening Commandments, is unrecorded. This is doubtless an extreme, although a perfectly true case. Other accidents can easily be conceived, if the musical part of even a simple service be left in the hands of any person to whom it is an absolute *novelty*.

I have no doubt that the avenues to a first Nonconformist appointment are guarded with equal caution. It would seem then, that in order to obtain a start in his career, a young organist must have been in some way connected with the church in which he seeks an appointment, either as a choir-boy or Sunday-school scholar, or as a regular attendant with his family at the services. Failing this, the next best thing is a recommendation to the church authorities from some well-known musician for whom he has frequently deputed, and from whom he may probably have received instruction in organ playing, and the proper fulfilment of church duty. The old-fashioned plan of advertising vacant church organ appointments and of making a certain number of selected candidates compete for the same before a professional umpire would appear to be well-nigh extinct in these days, although it is still often resorted to with the most excellent results when organists have to be appointed to Town Halls and other public secular posts. The interest which used

to be taken in these organ competitions was—in London at any rate—*immense*. Sometimes the public were admitted by payment. An old amateur friend of mine (now deceased) attended hundreds of them in the fifties, sixties, and seventies of the last century, and used to preserve carefully written accounts of them in volumes of reference. Each account gave place and date, name of umpire, names of all the candidates with the pieces they played, and other particulars of the competition, with notes on the various performances and the result of the competition, which was often awarded not in accordance with the verdict of the umpire but according to the voting of the members of the vestry.

Many amusing stories could be told of these competitions : I will claim your kind indulgence for one, which I had first-hand from my old friend and master, Dr. E. J. Hopkins. That gentleman who I need hardly say used frequently to act as umpire was once fulfilling this duty at a competition a few miles out of London. After the last candidate had been heard, Dr. Hopkins, who had been sitting in a sheltered position in one of the side-galleries unobserved by anybody in the church, thought he would like to have a turn at the organ himself. This he managed to do without being seen, and hidden behind the orthodox red curtains of the period, he extemporized for some ten minutes or so, and as the tone of the organ pleased him, we may well imagine that he enjoyed himself. After descending to the vestry room and delivering his verdict on the day's performances, he made his way to the railway-station for his return journey. Whilst waiting for the train, he got into conversation with a gentleman unknown to him, and the conversation having turned on objects of interest in the neighbourhood Dr. Hopkins happened to say how much he admired the architecture of the church. "Oh," said the stranger, "if you have been to the church, you have probably heard some of the organ competition which has been going on to-day." The doctor being discreetly silent on this subject, his interrogator proceeded to say: "I have attended a good many competitions in my time, but I never before heard of a more disgraceful or unjust verdict than that which was given to-day. I, Sir, was present the whole time, and heard every candidate play. I do not pretend to be a great musical authority, but I *do* know what good organ playing is like when I hear it, and there could be no doubt that the last player of all was the best of the lot. Yet, I hear the appointment was given to No. 3. a far inferior player in every respect to the one who played *last*." Unhappily, the London train came in at this moment, and if the speaker is still living, he may probably yet think that a great injustice was done.

The present difficulty of obtaining a first organ appointment is not without obvious advantages, if it be the means of preventing young people with no very special gifts from embarking upon a professional career, which is likely to offer them no tangible prospect of ultimate success as time goes on. Undoubtedly the best advice which can be given to *any* aspirant for a first organ appointment is that given by *Punch* to certain other people who contemplate an even more serious step in life—DON'T! This warning will fall unheeded upon those whose life-mission is clearly marked out for them by an all-wise Providence in the direction of a musical career. They *must* and *will* be musicians, and no power on earth can hinder them from following the path—long, anxious, and weary though it may be—for which they were born and gifted. But such a warning may have a salutary effect upon some who think the musical life is an easy and emotional one, and who fondly imagine that by adopting it they can escape some of the sterner tasks and duties of this mundane existence of ours. Prevention is always better than cure, and one of the best ways of arresting the indiscriminate influx into an already over-crowded profession is to make the portal thereof narrow and difficult of ingress. Bearing this in mind, we may be disposed to regard the difficulty of obtaining a first organ appointment as being not altogether an unmixed evil.

2. The next thing which concerns All Sorts and Conditions of Organists after they have obtained their appointments is the important question—HOW LONG ARE THEY LIKELY TO KEEP THEIR POSTS? Now-a-days we hear such terms as “fixity of tenure” used so frequently that we are led to conclude either that organ appointments ought to be held with greater security than has hitherto been the case, or that, for some reason or other, they change hands more often than they used to do. Up to the present time, organ appointments have been held under two conditions, (1) by annual election (usually at Easter), and (2) by an agreement the termination of which requires a three months' notice on either side. There *may* be a few cases of appointment under free-hold or life-hold conditions, of which I am not aware; but if any such exist, their number would probably be small enough to justify us in disregarding them.

Annual elections are (as far as this country is concerned) rapidly becoming things of the past, but Dr. Turpin informs me that in America they still prevail, and take place usually in May. Organists going from England to the United States should therefore take care to be assured of the conditions under which appointments are held in that country. Annual elections

had their advantages, but as they did not always mean the election of the *same person* year after year, the fixity of tenure thus conferred was only good for twelve months at each annual renewal. Some of the early volumes of the *Musical World*, *Musical Standard*, and other papers of the kind, record instances in which an organist suddenly found himself out of a berth at Easter, owing to the cabals and caprices of a set of irresponsible vestrymen having resulted in the election of someone else. In fact, the women-folk of City tradesmen-parishioners always had it in their power to raise party feeling against the organist in the Easter Vestry sufficiently strong to eject him from office. It is not therefore a matter for very great regret that the time-honoured custom of annual election, once so common, seems everywhere to be giving place to the more just and convenient one of terminating an organist's professional agreement by an ordinary three months' notice.

If we look about us, we shall find that the great bulk of all sorts and conditions of organists *keep* their posts fairly well. Take for example most of the organists listed in the "Roll of the Union of Graduates in Music"; or let us narrow the number down to the members of the existing Council of the R.C.O., and see how long these gentlemen have individually held their present posts. I find the average fixity of tenure to be nearly 17 years, but out of the number four members of the Council have retained their posts for more than 30 years, Dr. Armes heading the list with 41, Dr. Jordan 37, Mr. Hoyte 35, and Dr. Keeton 33. At my own church in the City of London (S. Clement, Eastcheap), the Churchwardens' accounts show that the Purcell family held the post for 54 years—from 1711 to 1765, in which year Jonathan Battishill was appointed; he was organist for 36 years until his death in 1801, since which year only three organists have been appointed, of whom I am the third. Only five different names in nearly 200 years!

Some of these records may be fairly said to at least equal in stability the average "fixity of tenure" enjoyed by the royal occupants of the throne itself; they will certainly bear favourable comparison with records of other appointments held *within* as well as without the Church. The steady permanence of an organist's position will compare very favourably with the brief tenure of office enjoyed by many curates. It may be said of course that a curate *may* become a bishop, whilst the organist remains exactly as he was; yet clerical promotion of this kind is sufficiently exceptional to warrant an organist saying of himself, when compared with many of his reverend associates, "Men may come, and men may go, but I go on for ever."

But it is one thing for a curate to go, and quite another thing for an incumbent (rector or vicar) or the principal supporter of a chapel to go. A change of this kind at head-quarters very often means that the organist has to go too—but not always. However, such changes are occasionally effected when a new “king” arises who knows not Joseph; or when some discontented faction is formed in the congregation—people who dislike music, or think there is too much of it, or that it is not the right kind of music to please them, or that its performance is not of a standard sufficiently good to satisfy their devotional or other needs, and so on. Objections such as these, and thousands like them may be hurled at the organist’s head; and if he be not sufficiently strong in various ways to meet and overcome them, they may be the means of dethroning him, or of otherwise causing him to fall from his high estate. Then it is that we hear a sound of many voices clamouring for a better fixity of tenure for organists, that a bishop’s licence should be available, and many other suggestions.

In a conversation which I had the other day with Dr. F. G. Shinn, that gentleman pointed out that a Bishop’s licence might in itself be an element of danger. With a change of incumbent, the new parson might feel disposed to treat a “licensed” organist in the same way that he would treat the licensed curates of his predecessor, viz: by making a clean sweep of his entire staff; especially if he had someone else in view, or thought from first appearances that he might not be able to “get on” with the organist he found in office. He *might* be disposed to continue a three months’ agreement, which he would feel he could terminate at his own convenience, if necessary; but he might *not* be as willing to continue an appointment held under a Bishop’s licence which would cause him some trouble to terminate, having once made himself a party to its continuance.

Bishops’ licences are at their best “unknown quantities,” and therefore not to be depended upon. An organist’s strength should lie *within* rather than *without* his own personality. Here comes in the value of Dr. Madeley Richardson’s idea that organists should be men of culture. And, without saying anything about the desirability (or otherwise) of an organist holding the University degree of M.A., it cannot be too strongly urged upon all sorts and conditions of organists, whether university men or not, that they should cultivate to the utmost of their ability the business-like faculty of “tackling” other people in an effective and successful manner. Education, refinement and culture are exceedingly good things for everyone to possess,

but a knowledge of the world we live in, and its curious little ways ; the amount of self-control necessary for the keeping of one's temper ; and above all, the acquisition of a tactful and pleasant way of dealing with our fellow men and women, leading them unconsciously but surely to see things more in the light in which *we* see them, are things which are absolutely essential to every organist who desires "fixity of tenure." I do not say that the absence of these good qualities will always explain why appointments are lost, but their possession will in many cases account largely for the considerable time an appointment is held.

I will not deny that a great deal can be said in favour of a better secured fixity of tenure for the members of our profession. It may be fairly urged that because an organist's technical education costs nearly or quite as much as that of a clergyman or minister, he ought to be nearly or quite as secure in his position as the occupants of the pulpit are in theirs. Further, when it is remembered that in order to fulfil the many church duties which now devolve upon him, the organist has to live near his church, and if the neighbourhood is a fashionable or pretentious one he has to pay a heavy rental in order to "keep up appearances" and obtain his share of local music-teaching, he should therefore be secured from undue pecuniary losses resulting from frequent house-moving and the consequent changes of secular occupation. For the transition from one organ appointment to another but too often compels a musician to seek fresh woods and pastures new—in possibly less favoured districts for teaching, and those other professional avocations which so necessarily augment his income.

These and like considerations must in common justice be taken into account, but the question of a better secured fixity of tenure has unfortunately its other side. It is impossible to close our eyes to the bad effect of free-hold or life-hold appointments upon Cathedral lay-vicars ; in fact the abuse of absolute fixity of tenure has practically killed the appointment of such musicians *for life*. The system cannot be said to have *ever* worked *well*. The old lutenist and singer, Thomas Mace, lay-clerk of Trinity College, Cambridge, in the 18th century, mentions a case in point in his well-known book, entitled, *Musick's Monument*. Mace himself was an eye and ear-witness of the following dramatic incident :—The scene is a cathedral vestry room, the time, after prayers. The dean is rebuking a lay-vicar "very justly for a gross absurdity committed by the latter in that very service time," where, in an anthem solo, "by reason of his great *dunstical* inefficiency in singing, he was so notoriously and ridiculously *out*, as caused all or most of the young people then

present to burst out into laughter, to the great blemish of the church service and the dishonour of God." The life-appointed lay-vicar, nothing daunted by the well-merited rebuke of the dean, replies "with a most stern angry countenance, and a vehement rattling voice, even so as he made the church ring withal, saying, 'Sir-r-r' (shaking his head) 'I'd have you know I sing after the rate of so much a year, and except ye mend my wages, I am resolved never to sing better whilst I live.'" Thomas Mace adds that the dean never again found fault with that particular singer, who was "hugged more than sufficiently by all the rest of his puny poor fellow clerks for this his heroic vindication and wit." I am old enough to remember a scarcely better state of things at Salisbury, where, one morning after service, one of the canons happening to meet a lay-vicar who had been absent, remarked to him very mildly what a pity it was he was not in his place that day, as the anthem had been so badly sung. "Oh," said the lay-clerk, "badly sung was it? then I am very glad I was not there!" Dr. Wesley, in his celebrated pamphlet on *Cathedral Music*, 1849, states that once "when attending service at Christ Church, Oxford, he remarked to the organist, Dr. Marshall, 'Why, you have only one man in a surplice to-day, and him I can't hear.' The reply was, 'No, he is only a beginner!'" An *organist* with such a life-hold appointment could scarcely be guilty of such gross neglect of duty as this; but it is as easy to imagine the rut into which he would get, could he never be removed, as it is to picture the inconvenience and discomfort he would cause to those who had to listen to him every Sunday. On the other hand, a really competent and conscientious musician might find a more or less absolute fixity of tenure exceedingly awkward to deal with in the event of his being fortunate enough to secure a better post. He might even lose his "new love" before he was fairly "off with the old." On the whole, all things being duly considered, the present system of holding an organ appointment open to a three months' notice on either side will be found to work very well.

There are cases in which an organist is improperly deprived of his appointment through no fault of his own, and these may be safely left to local public opinion to be dealt with. Some people may think that the interference of such a society as the I.S.M. or perchance of the R.C.O. may be both necessary and desirable in such cases, in order to exert a well-directed moral influence upon those in authority who are treating their organist badly. But considering the enormous difficulty experienced in making an effective interference by any person or society—however good-natured and influential—who may be outside the range of

local observation, and therefore incapable of exercising any impartial judgment upon the real facts of the case, it must be evident that the chances of doing any real good under such unfavourable conditions are extremely small.

3. I now pass on to a brief consideration of that most difficult of all questions THE REMUNERATION OF ORGANISTS. Let us look at it fairly and squarely, and in as business-like a manner as we can. In the first place, a merely superficial observation of things as they exist to-day will reveal the encouraging fact that the number of high-salaried organ appointments at the present time is much larger than it was a quarter of a century ago. Many London churches, for example, pay stipends which formerly could only be secured by Cathedral organists, and it is not too much to say that there has been a general augmentation of payment for organ-duty all the way round. And as a rule British organists are better paid than are their Continental brethren. A great many causes could doubtless be assigned for this obvious improvement of the financial position of all sorts and conditions of organists : such as the Church Revival, the rapid progress made in worship-music by all denominations of Nonconformists, the quickening of the popular taste for art of all kinds, and so on. We will not stay to discuss these now, but there is just one point of coincidence I do not wish to lose sight of. However much or little we may feel disposed to regard this coincidence as a matter of cause and effect, the fact remains that the growth of organists' salaries has accompanied and may be said to correspond proportionately with the development and influence of the work initiated and maintained by The Royal College of Organists since its institution. I do not press the fact of this coincidence, but I think it of sufficient interest to deserve mention and consideration at our hands—particularly in the direction of the loyal support we may all of us hope to tender to the College in the future. The College well deserves such support.

I am inclined to slightly emphasize this statement, because it is the fashion of certain anonymous letter-writers in the musical journals to prescribe the formation of some wonderful *new society* which they fondly imagine will be a kind of panacea for all sorts and conditions of ills. We may rest assured, however, that schism of any kind promotes weakness rather than strength ; and if we wish to maintain the improvement in organists' remuneration already noticed we cannot have a better guide for our future conduct than the College motto *In unitate vis est*. There is not the slightest necessity for the multiplication of societies, nor is there any reason whatever why every religious

denomination under the sun should have its own Special Association of Organists with its own Examinations, Diplomas, and what not. An impartial survey of what the College has done towards raising the status, and improving the financial position of organists will afford the best possible reply to the wild and reckless clamour for new societies on the part of the newspaper scribblers just mentioned.

But now let us go more deeply into the question before us, and examine some of the principles which underlie the process of remuneration. Speaking generally, the rate of payment for professional services varies (1) according to the value of such services to the community at large, and (2) according to the financial ability of that portion of the community to whom they are locally rendered. "Time" it is commonly said "is money"; but the value of any man's time can only fairly be assessed in the two ways I have mentioned. Professional time is most valuable when the vendor is capable of doing something in a better way than most men can do the same thing. Professional time is also most valuable when the vendor, who although not head and shoulders higher than any of his fellows in his special sphere of work, is nevertheless better equipped than they by force of character, or by other exceptional circumstances for meeting and satisfying any great public need or emergency. Let me illustrate what I mean. To speak only of those who are gone. I may perhaps refer to the late W. T. Best as a typical example of an artist who was able to command a rate of remuneration in something like a just proportion to his superior skill as an organ-player. On the other hand, the late Sir John Stainer, who, although he may or may not have been a better organ-player than his friend and instructor George Cooper, was undoubtedly better equipped both by force of character and by special training for the great task of regenerating the choir and musical services of S. Paul's Cathedral.

Now let us consider for a moment or two the principle that payment necessarily varies according to the financial ability of that portion of the community to whom professional services are locally rendered. If that financial position be a humble one, it necessarily follows that only those professional services will be in request which are absolutely necessary to the moral and physical life of the people. It is easy to picture a locality in which a clergyman, lawyer or doctor may be *necessary* to the community, while an organist, if he be not regarded exactly as an unnecessary person, is yet looked upon as a kind of *luxury*, useful only as an assistant to the clergyman or minister, and to be paid accordingly. Again, let us picture another, and

better favoured locality, such as a respectable suburban parish, or a small provincial town. Here the people are able perhaps to pay *more* for the services of an organist, but yet not enough to compensate him for the whole of his time. He must therefore do something else than play his organ in order to *live*. In such a neighbourhood we may be tolerably certain that all the inhabitants would not attend one and the same place of worship; there would probably be half a dozen or more churches and chapels, each requiring a musical service and an organist to maintain it. Now imagine, if you can, all these organ appointments held by professional musicians each being obliged to augment his church salary by the proceeds of his secular teaching. It is easy to see that such a congested state of competition could not last very long. It would come to this, that one (or perhaps two) professional men might be able to hold organ appointments in the place, the remaining posts would have to be filled by people whose income did not entirely depend upon the teaching and practice of music. We clearly see then, that there is an ever increasing need for organists at a small rate of remuneration in places where it is absolutely impossible either to pay more, or for the organist to earn more. Who then can fill these small posts? Either young musicians whose undeveloped professional skill is still in that embryo student stage, glad of any training ground—no matter what its social environments may be—for the purpose of gaining experience for better and more congenial spheres of action, or *amateurs*.

It is one of the greatest advantages of the R.C.O. that its membership, nay its higher diploma is open to the amateur as well as to the professional organist. In this way the College is really endeavouring to meet a real public need by the encouragement and testing of amateur talent. I am not merely theorizing. My ten years' experience as Hon. Choirmaster for the East London Church Fund Festivals has brought me into connection with hundreds of East-end parishes in which no professional organist solely depending upon the exercise of his art could possibly exist, still less *thrive*. I wish to take this opportunity of saying how deeply impressed I am with the general excellence of the work done by amateur organists in these poor districts. The amount of zeal, of enthusiasm, and of real self-devotion shown by these hard-working men and women is worthy of the highest praise. In a few cases I have found the organ seats occupied by students of some one or other of our big Metropolitan teaching institutions, but, I am bound to say in all common honesty that I have generally found the *best* work done by men who do not look upon their posts as stepping stones to higher and better things, but who are content to go on, year in,

and year out, working at some secular occupation all day, and devoting their evenings and Sundays to the exercise of the Divine Art, which often burns quite as brightly in the soul of the amateur as ever it does in the professional musician. I have always found these amateur friends of mine intensely loyal to any one whom they can regard as possessing superior skill or wider knowledge to their own. How Sir John Stainer was worshipped by troops of such amateur organists whilst he was yet amongst us at S. Paul's ! How they cherish his memory now that he has gone, as they would revere the life, work, and character of a *saint* ! Such men come to us to be *taught* (and I know of no more conscientious pupil than the amateur who brings business habits and methodical work into his musical studies), they come to us to be *examined* at the R.C.O., and if they fail the first time, there is no end to their patience and perseverance as they go on working in the hope of securing better luck next time. It is sometimes thoughtlessly remarked that amateur organists should be discouraged, because they are alleged to "take the bread out of the professional organist's mouth." I have endeavoured to show the need which exists for amateur work, and if any professional man suffers in the way just described, perhaps a little well-directed *self*-examination will reveal to him his weak spots and will enable him to get the better of the amateur in future.

Before leaving the question of remuneration, there is just one "side issue" which we must not overlook. It has been stated by more than one anonymous writer on the subject of "the organist's outlook," that a great deal of ordinary *local* teaching is seriously interfered with, and disastrously encroached upon, by *the great schools and colleges of music*. We are told that this evil exists in a two-fold shape : (1) pupils attend these institutions who would otherwise receive lessons from the local organist, and (2) these pupils afterwards became teachers themselves, and consequently increase the local competition. I am of course unable to say how far this evil (if it really exists) is felt in the provinces ; I will therefore speak only of London. The first part of the complaint we are now dealing with can be easily disposed of by a simple arithmetical calculation. Ascertain first from a reliable Musical Directory the number of London teachers therein listed. Next, find out how many students are being trained in the large recognized institutions. Then, let us suppose the doors of all these institutions to be closed, and the pupils thereof divided equally amongst the whole mass of teachers. What would be the result ? I have worked it out and find that each teacher would gain less than *one* hour's work per week, and that is all.

But think of the loss to the art if these institutions were closed. Compare the academical methods of teaching with some of the private ones—the teaching of experts with that of people who have a smattering of *everything*, but downright proficiency in *nothing*. Compare the spirit of emulation and desire to outstrip fellow competitors which characterizes the work of the academical student, with the chilling isolation but too often experienced by the private student. Think of the all-round aspect of the Art which a big musical college presents to a young and enthusiastic worker and thinker, and then say what would become of the future of music in this country if all our great recognized teaching institutions were abolished. Would any teaching whatever be left for the local organist if the motive power which moves the whole machinery were stopped? The system of registration even now enforced by the Board of Education is bound in course of time to sweep away incompetent teaching. But do we ever think how *comparatively* few of the students of our musical colleges become teachers in after-life? Do we ever wonder why masters and mistresses of secondary schools never complain of the competition raised against *their* teaching monopoly by the great public schools of Eton, Harrow, Rugby, Marlborough, Cheltenham, and a score of others? Nay, should we not expect to hear bitter complaints from these private teachers against the Universities which send out troops of new instructors of youth every year? Again, I venture to think that it would be far wiser, if instead of scribbling anonymous complaints to newspaper editors, our brethren who dislike the big music-schools would try and improve their own teaching methods.

4. Much could be said concerning the relation which ought to exist between the organist and those under and with whom he is called upon to work. The result of such a discussion—did time permit—would probably take the form of three practical suggestions in the respective directions of Sympathy, Mutual Understanding, and Non-interference.

Sympathy is essential, if work is to be done smoothly and without friction. It is always well for a church organist if he can conscientiously see “eye to eye” with his clergyman or minister in religious matters; and if his views be different to theirs, he will act wisely if he keeps his opinions to himself. It is a somewhat fortunate circumstance that the cultivation of church music is *comparatively* free from that *odium theologicum* which clings so closely to well nigh everything else relating to the worship of Almighty God. Sympathy for the parson may be shown by the organist’s careful avoidance of troubling him

unnecessarily with organ and choir worries ; sympathy for the organist may be shown by the parson's realization of the uphill character of a young musician's professional life, and a desire to help him to win that honourable reputation for which he so earnestly longs.

Then, secondly, there should be a distinct understanding with the "powers that be" from the very first, as to the duties and privileges of the organist—how far he is to be responsible for the choir, how much time he is to devote to rehearsals, what voice he is to have in the selection of music (a most important question to the highly trained and capable organist), to what extent he may be allowed the use of the organ for practice, lessons, recitals, etc., what holidays he may take, and, above all, how much of his duty may be occasionally performed by deputy. Many of the more enlightened of the clergy and other ministers fully recognize the necessity of accommodating a valued professional organist by allowing him deputies for the comparatively unimportant portions of his duty, and by generally refraining from making undue demands upon his time. Wherever this is done, it is a point of honour with the organist to do his utmost for the church with that limited portion of time which he has at his disposal.

And thirdly, the wise organist will suffer no man nor woman to occupy an intermediate and interfering position between himself and his clergyman or minister. We can scarcely imagine one of His Majesty's war ships going into active service with two rival commanders issuing conflicting orders to the crew ; it is equally absurd to suppose that an organist can effectively carry out his duty if some one else be allowed to interfere with the choir, or the control of the organ. These are some of the more obvious "rocks ahead" which a discerning organist will do well to look out for ; but as far as his connection with the clergy may be concerned it should be remarked that human nature is very much the same under all sorts and conditions of religious thought. Probably any parson who has the fatal gift of making himself disagreeable, can conveniently find opportunities for exercising his talent without much regard as to whether the Church is Established or Disestablished, Roman or Protestant, Conformist or Nonconformist.

And now, having considered some of the chief difficulties which beset the exercise of our professional duty, there yet remains one more important question to be answered—Why does a musician become an organist? Certainly not for the sake of making money, but for the love of the work itself. A young

man becomes an organist because he is actuated by motives similar to those which produce successful soldiers, sailors, lawyers, doctors, or clergymen, because he couldn't be anything else if he tried. He feels somehow that this kind of work is the particular thing for which he was created, that work of all others which his Creator sent him into the world to do. If this be so, then we may say with all reverence that such a man may hope and expect that the Creator who formed him for a special work will give him strength to do it, and will find a way for him wherein he can exercise his skill, and live as a useful member of society.

Stimulated by trust in that Supreme Providence which he believes controls and governs all human affairs, even though it seems at times to "move in a mysterious way"; such an *ideal organist* will leave no stone unturned to thoroughly equip himself for his life's work. He will, as Mr. Andrew Carnegie suggests in his recent book "put all his eggs into one basket, and carefully *watch that basket*." It will be ever to him his one masterful passion influencing the whole of his conduct. He will be always watchful, always given to self-examination, always eager to find out that particular department of artistic activity in which he is naturally fitted to excel. Few can surpass in everything, many can rise to a high level in *one* thing, even if that one thing be the sometimes despised Art of Counterpoint. Having discovered his own especial sphere of action, our ideal organist will by no means neglect opportunities for gathering information from all available sources which will throw additional light upon the central object of his life. He may or may not become an M.A., that is quite immaterial; the one thing needful is to acquire knowledge for its own sake rather than for the mere purpose of passing examinations and so becoming "hall-marked." Again, he will not be unduly cast down and depressed by temporary disappointment. He may indeed enter upon his career—as so many of us have done—with the idea of becoming a Cathedral organist; but as time goes on, and he still finds himself outside the hands of a "Dean and Chapter," he may be wise to reconsider the ambitious desire of his youth, when he will probably see upon reflection that there are reasons why he might not have secured success as a cathedral organist, and then, if he keeps his eyes open, he will scarcely fail to observe some other path which invites his attention, and which (if diligently, patiently and loyally followed) will lead him nearer and nearer, day by day, to the special work for which he is best qualified by character, temperament and training to do.

I hope that the sketch I have so roughly drawn of the ideal

organist is not altogether untrue to life. If it be not so, then such a musician has nothing to fear on the score of adequate remuneration. By doing always the "nexte thyng"—the thing nearest to hand, and doing it with his might, in no half-hearted manner, he will every day be fitting himself more perfectly for the battle of life, and he will find out gradually, by slow degrees at first, that he is making himself useful to his fellow-men, and occupying a position amongst them in that particular way he alone is best qualified to fill. Then will he realize the truth of a certain great Scriptural direction which has always been acted upon by our college, and especially by such members of it as the late Dr. James Higgs, whose patience and stability of character had quite as much to do with the successful building up of this institution as did his ripe experience and wise counsel; I refer to those time-honoured words—

"IN QUIETNESS AND IN CONFIDENCE SHALL 'BE
YOUR STRENGTH."



